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TOWARDS A  
FEMINIST ENERGY  
JUSTICE  
FRAMEWORK

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE  
ENERGY TRANSITION IN SUB-  
SAHARAN AFRICA

NORA GÖTZMANN AND MATHILDE DICALOU

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## **TOWARDS A FEMINIST ENERGY JUSTICE FRAMEWORK: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Authors: Nora Götzmann (Chief Adviser) and Mathilde Dicalou (Adviser), Danish Institute for Human Rights

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Wilders Plads 8K  
DK-1403 Copenhagen K  
Phone +45 3269 8888  
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# CHAPTER 1

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper explores a feminist energy justice approach in the context of women's participation in energy transition decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest energy access rate in the world, with only half of the population having access to modern forms of energy.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, over 600 million people lacked access to electricity and 890 million still depended on unsafe, non-renewable traditional fuels.<sup>2</sup> A key challenge in the region is to provide modern energy services to combat poverty and foster development. As part of addressing this challenge, many countries in the region have been working to increase renewable energy capacity in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

The energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa is a gendered issue. Research shows that women are deeply affected by the development of renewable energy projects as they are often responsible for critical energy-intensive activities in households and communities. In many Sub-Saharan African communities, women are caretakers, domestic workers and subsistence providers who are responsible for gathering traditional fuels, such as charcoal and firewood, for household chores and cooking.<sup>4</sup> As such, they are frequently at the frontline of energy insecurity and the health and safety risks related to traditional energy sources.<sup>5</sup> Despite this, women are often not involved in environmental management and energy-related decision-making, be this at the local, national or regional level.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, if attention is not given to gender inequalities and dynamics in the energy transition, efforts to increase access to renewable energy could maintain, increase or even create new gender inequalities, rather than diminish them and their subsequent socio-economic, environmental and financial repercussions.<sup>7</sup>

This paper is informed by academic and grey literature on energy justice and the gender-energy nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper also draws on recent project work of the Danish Institute for Human Rights and partners, namely three scoping papers on human rights and the energy transition in Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia respectively, and

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Corfee-Morlot et al, 'Achieving Clean Energy Access in Sub-Saharan Africa', *OECD*, <https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/climate-futures/Achieving-clean-energy-access-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf> (accessed 6 December 2022) 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael Obonyo, 'Push for Renewables: How Africa is Building a Different Energy Pathway', *Africa Renewal* (6 January 2021), <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2021/push-renewables-how-africa-building-different-energy-pathway> (accessed 6 December 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Khayaat Fakier, 'Women and Renewable Energy in a South African Community: Exploring Energy Poverty and Environmental Racism' (2018) 19:5 *Journal of International Women's Studies* 165, 166.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Amita Makan, 'Power for Women and Men: Towards a Gendered Approach to Domestic Energy Policy and Planning in South Africa' (1995) 17:2 *Third World Planning Review* 183, 184.

<sup>6</sup> Seema Arora-Jonsson, 'Virtue and Vulnerability: Discourses on Women, Gender and Climate Change' (2011) 21 *Global Environmental Change* 744, 749; Fakier, note 4, 166.

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Pearl-Martinez and Jennie C Stephens, 'Toward a Gender Diverse Workforce in the Renewable Energy Transition' (2016) 12:1 *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy* 8, 2.

associated stakeholder engagement; as well as a background paper and roundtable on women and the energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>8</sup> Prompted by these sources and engagements, this paper examines the following questions: How does energy justice literature currently address gender, specifically women's rights and women's participation? What might a feminist approach to energy justice look like? Could a feminist energy justice framework be useful for guiding further research and practice on women's participation in energy transition decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa?

To date, focus on gender in academic literature on energy justice and the energy transition in the region remains scarce. To the extent that gender considerations are advanced, these tend to have a narrow focus on energy poverty,<sup>9</sup> specifically household-level considerations such as clean cooking, solar home systems and energy access, rather than evincing more explicitly feminist aims of analysing and transforming power relations that underpin current energy decision-making at policy, community, household or individual level. This replicates well-known feminist problems of women being treated as a homogenous group, essentialising women and instrumentalising their participation in maintaining the status quo. Frequently, this is exemplified by an instrumental understanding of women's participation whereby increased access to energy for women at the household level is simplistically equated to women's empowerment more broadly. Furthermore, the discourse remains within an existing neoliberal paradigm in which enhanced energy access is primarily seen as a precondition for economic growth rather than a matter of social justice.

A further consideration emanating from the literature relates to the concept of energy justice itself. As a relatively new concept, gaining traction over the last ten years, most literature on energy justice to date comes from the Global North, with only few examples of local-contextual interpretations or applications in Sub-Saharan Africa. Whether this presents an intractable shortcoming or an opportunity for further conceptual development arguably remains to be seen. With its focus on three interrelated elements – distributional, recognitional and procedural justice – it is certainly arguable that energy justice has strong potential to guide energy transition analysis and practice in a way that furthers social justice goals, including those related to gender equality. A key appeal is the assertion that energy justice is not just a theoretical concept but is concerned with what happens in practice. A core aim of energy justice is to contribute to a more 'just' energy transition by leading to concrete changes in the behaviour of politicians, investors, civil society and others.

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<sup>8</sup> See here <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/womens-human-rights-energy-transition-sub-saharan-africa-roundtable-event-outcome> and here <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/scoping-papers-human-rights-energy-transition> (accessed 8 December 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Energy poverty can be defined as 'the lack of access to sustainable modern energy services and products', including where there is a lack of 'adequate, affordable, reliable, quality, safe and environmentally sound energy services to support development.' Energy poverty therefore not only relates to the lack of physical access, but also encompasses the systemic inequalities that endure through that impossibility to access energy services and products. 'What Is Energy Poverty?', *Habitat for Humanity*, <https://www.habitat.org/emea/about/what-we-do/residential-energy-efficiency-households/energy-poverty> (accessed 13 December 2022).

Against this backdrop, in this paper we argue for more feminist and locally-contextually developed theoretical and practical approaches to energy justice. Looking at women's participation in energy transition decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on policy, we propose that energy justice has significant potential for strengthening women's participation and advancing a just transition. However, we also argue that this can only be the case if energy justice is interpreted and applied through a feminist lens that includes a strong focus on exposing and transforming the power relations currently at play in the energy transition. Without this, women's participation risks being relegated simplistically to the recognitional element of energy justice and opportunities for more transformative potential are lost. Critically, also, the relevance of the concept as a practical guiding framework for policy-makers and other stakeholders would need to be established through further application in practice and evaluation of its effectiveness.

The paper proceeds as follows. Part 2 provides some context background on gender and the energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa and presents the literature review. In Part 3, we explore the concept of energy justice as a possible framework for examining these gender issues and consider what a feminist approach to energy justice might look like. Drawing together these two sections, in Part 4 we look at how gender and women's participation are addressed in renewable energy policies and policy-making, using select examples from Sub-Saharan Africa. In Part 5, we conclude and suggest areas for further research and practice that could be undertaken to advance feminist interpretation and application of energy justice, with a view to strengthening women's participation in decision-making and transforming the power relations currently at play in the energy transition in the region.

# CHAPTER 2

## 2 GENDER AND THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

### 2.1 CONTEXT

Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest energy access rate in the world, with only half of the population having access to modern forms of energy.<sup>10</sup> The region accounts for three-quarters of the global population without access to electricity.<sup>11</sup> In 2021, over 600 million people lacked access to electricity and 890 million still depended on unsafe, non-renewable traditional fuels.<sup>12</sup> A key challenge for the energy sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, therefore, is to provide modern energy services to combat poverty and support development. As part of addressing this challenge, many countries in the region have been working to increase renewable energy capacity in recent years.<sup>13</sup>

The energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa is deeply gendered. Research shows that women bear the brunt of environmental destruction and the adverse impacts of climate change.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, women are affected by the development of renewable energy projects as they are often responsible for critical energy-intensive activities in households and communities. In many Sub-Saharan African communities, women are caretakers, domestic workers and subsistence providers who are responsible for gathering traditional fuels, such as charcoal and firewood, for household chores and cooking.<sup>15</sup> As such, they are frequently at the frontline of energy insecurity and the health and safety risks related to traditional energy sources.<sup>16</sup> Despite this, women are often excluded from environmental management and energy-related decision-making, be this at the local, national or regional level.<sup>17</sup> Research shows that women may be decision-makers where food and fuel options are concerned, but not when it comes to

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<sup>10</sup> Corfee-Morlot et al, note 1.

<sup>11</sup> IEA et al, *Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2021* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2021) 21.

<sup>12</sup> Corfee-Morlot et al, note 1; Njeri Wamukonya, 'A Critical Look at Gender and Energy Mainstreaming in Africa', Draft paper distributed at the 'Gender Perspectives in Sustainable Development' side event organised by UNDESA/DAW and WEDO at Prep Com III (April 2002), <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/forum-sustdev/Njeri-paper.pdf> (accessed 6 December 2022) 3.

<sup>13</sup> Raphael Obonyo, 'Push for Renewables: How Africa is Building a Different Energy Pathway', *Africa Renewal* (6 January 2021), <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/january-2021/push-renewables-how-africa-building-different-energy-pathway> (accessed 6 December 2022).

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Kemi Mildred Hughes, 'Climate and Gender Justice in Sub-Saharan Africa: Emerging Trends Post-Paris 2015' (2021) 38:2 *Wisconsin International Law Journal* 197, 197; Fakier, note 4, 167.

<sup>15</sup> Fakier, note 4, 166.

<sup>16</sup> Amita Makan, 'Power for Women and Men: Towards a Gendered Approach to Domestic Energy Policy and Planning in South Africa' (1995) 17:2 *Third World Planning Review* 183, 184.

<sup>17</sup> Seema Arora-Jonsson, 'Virtue and Vulnerability: Discourses on Women, Gender and Climate Change' (2011) 21 *Global Environmental Change* 744, 749; Fakier, note 4, 166.

project-level agreement-making or energy policy design.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, energy transition discourses often fail to take the necessary intersectional feminist lens, which underlines the diversity of experiences of different women.<sup>19</sup> Existing gender inequalities are thus reproduced in energy governance.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, if attention is not given to gender inequalities and dynamics in the energy transition, efforts to increase access to renewable energy could maintain, increase or even create new gender inequalities, rather than diminish them and their subsequent socio-economic, environmental and financial repercussions.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, and paradoxically, the energy transition is often conceived as gender neutral and therefore not warranting gender-responsive research and initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

Gendered inequalities are reflected at both the policy and project level. A persistent challenge remains the lack of representation of women in the energy workforce, including in decision-making spaces and governance institutions. Gendered stereotypes persist, with technical and scientific jobs frequently considered to be 'for men', contributing to women being systematically under-represented in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).<sup>23</sup> This is also reflected at the most senior levels of decision-making. For example, in 2018 only four out of 56 (or 7%) positions of lead energy sector ministers in Sub-Saharan Africa were women.<sup>24</sup> At the project-level, adverse impacts of renewable energy projects often have different implications for women and men. For example, women's labour in Sub-Saharan Africa is often informal and/or unpaid, while men are more likely to have formal, paid jobs.<sup>25</sup> This means that women's labour and loss of economic livelihood is often not properly accounted for, if at all, in compensation schemes put in place by government authorities and renewable energy companies. Because they generally earn a lower income, female-headed households and elderly women are particularly at risk of energy poverty.<sup>26</sup> The development of renewable energy infrastructure can also be accompanied by a rise in

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<sup>18</sup> Arora-Jonsson, note 17, 749; Katharina Wiese, 'Energy 4 All? Investigating Gendered Energy Justice Implications of Community-Based Micro-Hydropower Cooperatives in Ethiopia' (2020) 33:2 *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 194, 207; Mariëlle Feenstra and Gül Özerol, 'Energy Justice as a Search Light for Gender-Energy Nexus: Towards a Conceptual Framework' (2021) 138:110668 *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 1, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Shannon Elizabeth Bell, Cara Daggett and Christine Labuski, 'Toward Feminist Energy Systems: Why Adding Women and Solar Panels Is Not Enough' (2020) 68:101557 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 2; Oliver W Johnson et al, 'Intersectionality and Energy Transitions: A Review of Gender, Social Equity and Low-Carbon Energy' (2020) 70:101774 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Arora-Jonsson, note 17, 749.

<sup>21</sup> Rebecca Pearl-Martinez and Jennie C Stephens, 'Toward a Gender Diverse Workforce in the Renewable Energy Transition' (2016) 12:1 Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy 8, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Jenny Lieu et al, 'Three Sides to Every Story: Gender Perspectives in Energy Transition Pathways in Canada, Kenya and Spain' (2020) 68:101550 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 2.

<sup>23</sup> IRENA, *Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective* (Abu Dhabi: IRENA, 2019), 11–12.

<sup>24</sup> Maria Prebble and Ana Rojas, *Energizing Equality: The Importance of Integrating Gender Equality Principles in National Energy Policies and Frameworks* (Washington DC: IUCN, 2018) 13.

<sup>25</sup> 'ILO Calls for Urgent Action to Prevent Looming Global Care Crisis', *ILO* (28 June 2018), [https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS\\_633460/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/africa/media-centre/pr/WCMS_633460/lang--en/index.htm) (accessed 6 December 2022).

<sup>26</sup> EIGE, 'Energy', <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/energy> (accessed 4 April 2022).



sexual and gender-based violence, influenced by in-migration of a (usually) male-dominated workforce, as well as other changes in the social fabric associated with large-scale infrastructure development.<sup>27</sup>

As such, the energy transition is an especially fertile context to explore issues of women's participation and energy justice, as 'changes in energy systems are often confronted with power inequalities linked to politics and policy making.'<sup>28</sup>

## 2.2 GENDER DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this paper, we take a broad definition of 'gender' as a 'dynamic and mutable social construction of the relationships between women and men, where power and opportunity inequalities exist', while recognising that 'the discursive, cultural and ideological construction of gender allows that gender is experienced and performed differently by individuals within a community depending on intersecting systems, rather than being a generic division of women and men'.<sup>29</sup> As such, we understand gender to be distinctly relational, where the distribution of power and resources among people is critical for understanding how their gendered social and biological roles and responsibilities are constructed and exercised. While we seek to move beyond a binary approach in favour of a more dynamic understanding of gender, our analysis focuses primarily on the situation and positionality of those who identify or are viewed as women and girls, rather than exploring issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, or interrogating the concept of gender itself. By 'feminist approach' we mean something broader than simply incorporating 'women' as homogenous 'vulnerable' or 'marginalised' groups into existing, unequal institutions and structures. Instead, we understand a feminist approach to also involve observing and reimagining purportedly immutable frameworks, and disrupting and reimagining the unequal power relations created and perpetuated in the energy transition.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.3 METHOD AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The paper is informed by academic and grey literature on energy justice and the gender-energy nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper also draws on recent work of the Danish Institute for Human Rights and partners, namely three scoping papers on human rights and the energy transition in Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia respectively, and associated

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel O'Neil et al, *Building a Safer World: Toolkit for Integrating GBV Prevention and Response Into USAID Energy and Infrastructure Projects* (Rockville, MD: USAID, 2015) 10–11; Fabrina Furtado and Elisangla Soldateli Paim, *Energía en América Latina: Del Negocio a lo Común* (São Paulo: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo, 2019) 19; Andrea A Eras-Almeida et al, 'Lessons Learned from Rural Electrification Experiences with Third Generational Solar Home Systems in Latin America: Case Studies in Peru, Mexico, and Bolivia' (2019) 11:24 *Sustainability* 1.

<sup>28</sup> Lieu et al, note 22, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Julia C Keenan, Deanna Kemp and Rebecca B Ramsay, 'Company-Community Agreements, Gender and Development' (2016) 135:4 *Journal of Business Ethics* 607, 608–9.

<sup>30</sup> Our definitions of gender and feminism for the purpose of this paper are informed by the understandings summarised in Nora Götzmann et al, 'From Formalism to Feminism: Gender, Business and Human Rights' (2022) 7:1 *Business and Human Rights Journal* 1, 2–3 and Nora Götzmann and Nicholas Bainton, 'Embedding Gender-Responsive Approaches in Impact Assessment and Management' (2021) 39:3 *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 171, both of which draw on a variety of gender and feminist literature.

stakeholder engagement; as well as a background paper and roundtable on women and the energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the literature on the gender-energy nexus used was identified through the earlier scoping and background papers. To delve more specifically into the topic of energy justice, a literature search focused on ecofeminism, climate justice, energy justice and energy democracy was conducted in French, English and Spanish using different journal databases. Search terms always included 'women' and/or 'gender'. The initial research showed that not a lot of academic literature on the specific topics of women's rights and participation in the energy transition and energy justice in Sub-Saharan Africa was available as of March 2022. Therefore, a choice was made to look beyond Sub-Saharan Africa and research similar developments in Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. Following the initial literature search, further articles of interest were identified through reference lists.

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<sup>31</sup> See here <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/womens-human-rights-energy-transition-sub-saharan-africa-roundtable-event-outcome> and here <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/scoping-papers-human-rights-energy-transition> (accessed 8 December 2022).

# CHAPTER 3

## 3 A FEMINIST APPROACH TO ENERGY JUSTICE

### 3.1 DEFINING ENERGY JUSTICE

Drawing on environmental justice and climate justice discourses, the concept of energy justice has gained significant traction in the energy literature over the last ten years.<sup>32</sup> Energy justice can be defined as the ‘equitable distribution of, and participation in, renewable energy systems on the back of social justice claims’.<sup>33</sup> It is ‘a global energy system that fairly disseminates both the benefits and costs of energy services, and one that has representative and impartial energy decision-making.’<sup>34</sup> As such, it ‘is a conceptual, analytical and decision-making framework for understanding when and where ethical questions on energy appear, who should be involved in their resolution and ultimately which solutions must be pursued to achieve a sustainable energy system underpinned by fairness and equity.’<sup>35</sup>

To date, two primary frameworks of energy justice have been developed. The most prominent is the ‘three tenets’ framework, first put forward by McCauley et al in 2013 and subsequently developed by different authors.<sup>36</sup> This framework focuses on *distributional, recognitional and procedural* elements.<sup>37</sup> More recently, the elements of *cosmopolitan* and *restorative* justice have been added by some authors.<sup>38</sup> The second energy justice framework, first advanced by Sovacool and Dworkin in 2014, is an approach based on eight core principles – *availability, affordability, due process, transparency & accountability, sustainability, intragenerational equity, intergenerational equity* and *responsibility* – subsequently expanded to also include *resistance* and *respect*.<sup>39</sup> While we draw predominantly on the three tenets framework in this paper,

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<sup>32</sup> Raphael J Heffron and Darren McCauley, ‘The Concept of Energy Justice Across the Disciplines’ (2017) 105 *Energy Policy* 658, 658.

<sup>33</sup> Morven MacEwen and Darrick Evensen, ‘Mind the Gap: Accounting for Equitable Participation and Energy Democracy in Kenya’ (2021) 71:101843 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin K Sovacool and Michael H Dworkin, ‘Energy Justice: Conceptual Insights and Practical Applications’ (2015) 142 *Applied Energy* 435, 436.

<sup>35</sup> Darren McCauley et al, ‘Energy Justice in the Transition to Low Carbon Energy Systems: Exploring Key Themes’, (2019) 233-234 *Applied Energy* 916, 919.

<sup>36</sup> Darren McCauley et al, ‘Advancing Energy Justice: The Triumvirate of Tenets’ (2013) 32:3 *International Energy Law Review* 107. See also Raphael J Heffron and Darren McCauley, ‘Achieving Sustainable Supply Chains Through Energy Justice’ (2014) 123 *Applied Energy* 435; McCauley et al, note 35; Max Lacey-Barnacle, Rosie Robison and Chris Foulds, ‘Energy Justice in the Developing World: A Review of Theoretical Frameworks, Key Research Themes and Policy Implications’ (2020) 55 *Energy for Sustainable Development* 122.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew J Chapman, Benjamin C McLellan and Tetsuo Tezuka, ‘Prioritizing Mitigation Efforts Considering Co-Benefits, Equity and Energy Justice: Fossil Fuel to Renewable Energy Transition Pathways’ (2018) 219 *Applied Energy* 187, 188.

<sup>38</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917; Sovacool and Dworkin, note 34, 440; Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 658.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin K Sovacool and Michael H Dworkin, *Global Energy Justice: Problems, Principles, and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Benjamin K Sovacool and Michael H Dworkin, ‘Energy Justice: Conceptual Insights and Practical Applications’ (2015) 142 *Applied Energy* 435, 438–40; Benjamin K

we share the view that the two frameworks are complementary and have potential for integration.

The first tenet, *distributional* justice, 'is concerned with how the benefits and burdens of energy policy implementation are shared across society, *i.e.*, who pays, who benefits, and why.'<sup>40</sup> Inbuilt is the recognition that the global energy system is fundamentally unequal, including in terms of where technologies and resources are located and who can access them.<sup>41</sup> Distributional justice is not only concerned with access to affordable energy, but also the 'equitable distribution of benefits between both developers and communities and *within* communities.'<sup>42</sup> The distributional element also includes taking a whole of system approach that considers energy justice at each activity in the energy lifecycle, such as mining, development and decommissioning; as well as paying attention to temporal variations, such as potential impacts on future generations.<sup>43</sup>

The second tenet, *recognition* justice, requires identifying where inequalities emerge, including to 'identify groups who are misrepresented or discriminated against as a result of policy outcomes due to their views, social standing, cultural background or gender.'<sup>44</sup> It 'concerns access to decision-making processes that govern the distributions ... and manifests as a call for equitable procedures that engage all stakeholders in a non-discriminatory way'.<sup>45</sup> Informed strongly by Fraser's categories of misrecognition – cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect<sup>46</sup> – recognition requires going beyond merely acknowledging that parts of society will unfairly suffer from the distribution of energy system inequalities, to demanding that decision-makers identify where precisely these injustices occur and who may be marginalised and excluded.<sup>47</sup>

The third tenet, *procedural* justice, is concerned with the right to fair process.<sup>48</sup> It 'is concerned with an open and fair policy decision making process, such that all stakeholders have a voice, and the ability to participate in a meaningful way.'<sup>49</sup> According to Sovacool and Dworkin, procedural justice demands that four key elements be reunited: access to information; access to and meaningful participation in decision-making; lack of bias on the part of decision-makers; and access to legal processes for

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Sovacool, Matthew M Lipson and Rose Chard, 'Temporality, Vulnerability, and Energy Justice in Household Low Carbon Innovations' (2019) 128 *Energy Policy* 495, 497. See also Benjamin K Sovacool et al, 'New Frontiers and Conceptual Frameworks for Energy Justice' (2017) 105 *Energy Policy* 677, who articulate the 'respect' element more explicitly as 'intersectionality'.

<sup>40</sup> Chapman, McLellan and Tezuka, note 37, 188.

<sup>41</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917. See footnotes 18-20 therein.

<sup>42</sup> Kirsten Jenkins, 'Energy Justice, Energy Democracy, and Sustainability: Normative Approaches to the Consumer Ownership of Renewables', in Jens Lowitzsch (ed.), *Energy Transition: Financing Consumer Co-Ownership in Renewables* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 79, 84.

<sup>43</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 916; Heffron and McCauley, note 36; Kirsten Jenkins et al., 'Energy Justice: A Conceptual Review' (2016) 11 *Energy Research & Social Science* 174.

<sup>44</sup> Chapman, McLellan and Tezuka, note 37, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Jenkins, note 42, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a "Post-Socialist" Age', in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 58.

<sup>47</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917; Jenkins, note 42, 86.

<sup>48</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917.

<sup>49</sup> Chapman, McLellan and Tezuka, note 37, 188.

achieving redress.<sup>50</sup> It has also been suggested that the focus must move towards meaningful participation; to go beyond calling for inclusion in decision-making, to also include demands for more equitable outcomes of such decision-making.<sup>51</sup> This requires changes in culture, norms and values.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.2 RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION

As a *conceptual* tool, energy justice can serve philosophers and ethicists to better integrate distributive and procedural concerns into energy-related thinking.<sup>53</sup> As an *analytical* tool, the concept can assist energy researchers to better understand how values get built into energy systems or to resolve common problems within those energy systems. And as a *decision-making* tool, the concept has the potential to assist energy planners and consumers in making more informed energy choices.<sup>54</sup>

The practical application, that is, a focus on ‘what it does’ rather than ‘what it is’ is emphasised in the literature.<sup>55</sup> This is in response to the growing recognition that ‘routine energy analyses do not offer suitable answers’ to issues such as energy-related pollution, scarcity and other risks and harms to people and the environment.<sup>56</sup> Instead, energy-related decision-making involves enduring questions of equity and morality that are seldom explicitly considered in contemporary energy planning and analysis.<sup>57</sup> Energy justice could help reframe energy projects in ethical terms, thereby helping producers and consumers to be more aware, accountable and responsible for their decisions.<sup>58</sup> As such, the transformative potential of energy justice is its ability to counter the dominance of current technical-economic analysis in energy decision-making.<sup>59</sup> Concerned with the political dimensions of energy transitions, energy justice examines ‘how power is distributed and manifested in political and energy systems,’<sup>60</sup> including by ‘democratising energy through public participation and ownership’.<sup>61</sup> According to this view, problems associated with energy access, efficiency and distribution, are viewed as political and ethical issues, rather than purely technical or economic ones.<sup>62</sup>

To summarise, the benefits of energy justice noted in the literature focus on: viewing energy questions and systems as distinctly political and ethical issues, rather than purely technical-economic; practical application to drive actual change to reach more socially

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<sup>50</sup> Sovacool and Dworkin (2014), note 39.

<sup>51</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Sovacool and Dworkin, note 34.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 436.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 435.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 436.

<sup>59</sup> Lieu et al, note 22.

<sup>60</sup> MacEwen and Evensen, note 33, 3, emphasis added. See also Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 132.

<sup>61</sup> MacEwen and Evensen, note 33, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Sovacool and Dworkin, note 34, 437; Kirsten Jenkins, ‘Setting Energy Justice Apart from the Crowd: Lessons from Environmental and Climate Justice’ (2018) 39 *Energy Research & Social Science* 117; Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 659

just outcomes; and the transformative potential of renewable energies to address injustices and drive empowerment in energy access and delivery.<sup>63</sup> However, there are also a number of critiques. For example, it has been noted that energy justice conceptualisations to date have been driven by Global North authors, and that, despite promises of transformative change, there is scarce evidence of application in practice.

In relation to the first of these critiques, authors have noted that the literature on energy justice is Global North dominated, both in terms of the representation of authors writing on the subject matter but also in terms of the theoretical underpinnings in the current formulations of the concept.<sup>64</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds note, for example, that there has been no field-wide assessment of the variety of theoretical frameworks being used and suggest that a systematic approach is needed to assess the concept and its utility.<sup>65</sup> Studying literature on energy justice from the Global South, they identify several core themes that are poorly addressed in much of the Global North energy justice literature: decentralisation, access and sustainability; exposing institutional instability and corruption; and acknowledging marginalised communities and gender inequalities.<sup>66</sup> They suggest that such themes must be central for further development of the energy justice concept. Others have argued for the integration of non-Western justice theories in further defining energy justice.<sup>67</sup>

Despite its supposed practice-orientation, the hitherto limited application and testing of energy justice in practice has also been a point of critique.<sup>68</sup> Some argue that 'there is little empirical evidence of its traction on energy decision-making'.<sup>69</sup> Others lament the lack of case studies from the Sub-Saharan African region.<sup>70</sup> Key issues that emerge from this region – lack of attention to the role of elites, excessive corporate and government power and corruption, lack of political will – are consequently missed in conceptual frameworks of energy justice and associated implementation efforts.<sup>71</sup>

To address these shortcomings, authors have suggested a number of strategies, including: further context-specific development of energy justice; greater focus on a systems approach that pays particular attention to geography and decentralisation; and operationalisation of energy justice through inter-disciplinary approaches.

To achieve its aim of making real-world changes, further conceptual clarity of what constitutes energy justice is necessary.<sup>72</sup> In particular, authors have pointed to the need to develop context-specific understandings of energy justice that take into account non-Western approaches to energy access and justice, and are responsive to the practical

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<sup>63</sup> See e.g., Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 47, 125.

<sup>64</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 918.

<sup>65</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 123, 125.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

<sup>67</sup> Sovacool et al, note 39, 679.

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 660.

<sup>69</sup> Jenkins, note 62, 127.

<sup>70</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 126.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>72</sup> Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 663.

energy realities of different Global South contexts.<sup>73</sup> Sovacool et al, for example, elaborate the potential relevance of a number of non-Western justice frameworks to the concept of energy justice.<sup>74</sup> Looking at the Sub-Saharan African region, Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds argue for an energy justice approach that pays greater attention to the inequities presented by the global energy system, i.e. greater focus on North-South dynamics through attention to institutional instability and corruption in energy systems in the region.<sup>75</sup>

There have also been arguments in favour of a deeper systems approach that pays specific attention to geography and spatial analysis.<sup>76</sup> The role of decentralisation is emphasised in this regard, with some arguing that small-scale and local renewable energy schemes are particularly important for achieving energy justice, not least in terms of securing energy access.<sup>77</sup> A number of authors point to the need for additional research on bottom-up community-led initiatives for energy democracy and energy sovereignty;<sup>78</sup> relatedly exploring options for bypassing conventional grid development and exploring community ownership.<sup>79</sup> The specific role of renewable energies also comes to the fore here, as energy sources such as wind or solar may present better opportunities for decentralisation than some of the more strictly geographically bounded traditional energy sources such as coal and oil. Decentralisation is thus positioned as a key link in the access-sustainability nexus.

In relation to the further operationalisation of energy justice, authors have stressed the importance of inter-disciplinary approaches and multi-methods testing in different settings.<sup>80</sup> This would need to include recognition that policy formulation in the energy sector is dominated by technical and economic fields, where economic costing is usually the primary tool for decision-making.<sup>81</sup> To broaden the approach, quantitative methodologies in energy justice are needed<sup>82</sup> – distributional justice, for example, highlights that economic efficiency should not be a necessary or sufficient condition to justify a particular energy policy or project.

### **3.3 DEVELOPING A FEMINIST APPROACH TO ENERGY JUSTICE**

Interestingly, despite the clear relevance to all three energy justice tenets, discussion of gender and intersectionality in the energy justice literature is vastly under-developed. To the extent that gender is addressed, this is usually in relation to the recognitional element, with significantly less attention to distributional and procedural elements.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Sovacool et al, note 39; McCauley et al, note 35, 920; Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36.

<sup>74</sup> Sovacool et al, note 39.

<sup>75</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36.

<sup>76</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 917; Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36; Sovacool et al, note 39.

<sup>77</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 133.

<sup>78</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 920.

<sup>79</sup> Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 135.

<sup>80</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 920; Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36, 122; Sovacool et al, note 39; Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 658.

<sup>81</sup> Heffron and McCauley, note 32, 664.

<sup>82</sup> McCauley et al, note 35, 918.

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., Wiese, note 86, 194; Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 8.

Overall, references to gender or women are marginal, and if addressed at all, this is mainly in relation to the home, often linked to topics such as the benefits of decentralisation or solar home systems. Almost never is gender addressed in terms of women's involvement in decision-making at national level, systematic procedural barriers to such participation, aspects of distribution, or in terms of how energy justice interacts with gender equality more systematically. This lack of attention to gender is a glaring omission and presents a significant shortcoming in energy justice theory and practice to date that must be rectified.

Given this lack of attention to gender, one of the central questions that we seek to examine in this paper is whether a feminist approach to energy justice could in any way be useful for guiding further research and practice on women's participation in energy transition decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa. The concept of energy justice appeals as it is somewhat more focused than concepts such as 'just transition' or 'energy democracy'.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, we were drawn to energy justice for its potential in terms of conceptual, analytical and decision-making application. However, given the lack of attention to gender in the energy justice literature, we also argue that if energy justice is to make a meaningful contribution to women's participation in the energy transition in the region, more feminist and locally-contextually developed approaches are necessary. As a first step, it is essential to understand the current gaps in energy justice and gender-energy nexus literature from a feminist perspective, to identify entry points for reframing the concept of energy justice through a feminist lens.

In terms of the academic literature on the gender-energy nexus in the region, we found the often narrow focus on household-level considerations such as clean cooking, solar home systems and energy access by and large unsatisfactory for engaging with questions of women's participation and gender relations in spheres other than the household, be this national policy-making on energy or women's empowerment at the individual level. As pointed out by gender and feminist scholars, a simplistic focus on the household is problematic for several reasons.<sup>85</sup> Empirical research from several Sub-Saharan African countries on renewable energy projects targeting households, for instance, demonstrates that the design of such projects often fails to account for women's needs, despite the accompanying assumption that increased access to electrification primarily benefits women, as they are the ones responsible for most of the household chores.<sup>86</sup> For example, while reduced time for cooking due to access to

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<sup>84</sup> See Lacey-Barnacle, Robison and Foulds, note 36 for a useful summary of these different concepts.

<sup>85</sup> Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 2; Fakier, note 4, 166; Amita Makan, 'Power for Women and Men: Towards a Gendered Approach to Domestic Energy Policy and Planning in South Africa' (1995) 17:2 *Third World Planning Review* 183, 188; Annemarije Kooijman-van Dijk, 'ENERGIA's Gender and Energy Research Programme: Findings and Experience from Research for Policy' (2020) 51:1 *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin*, 91, 92, 99; Romy Listo, 'Gender Myths in Energy Poverty Literature: A Critical Discourse Analysis' (2018) 38 *Energy Research & Social Science* 9, 13.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., Katharina Wiese, 'Energy 4 All? Investigating Gendered Energy Justice Implications of Community-Based Micro-Hydropower Cooperatives in Ethiopia' (2020) 33:2 *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 194, 195; Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 6; Fakier, note 4, 167, 169; Makan, note 85, 190; Nathanael Ojong, 'The Rise of Solar Home Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: Examining Gender, Class, and Sustainability' (2021) 75:102011 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 6.



electricity may be welcomed, it does not necessarily translate into reducing women's work time, with quite some research showing that increased access to electricity can extend women's domestic work to after dark, whereas men have been more likely to use the additional time gained for recreation or business activities.<sup>87</sup> Such findings illustrate the necessity of addressing gender relations, the gendered division of labour and women's empowerment as an integral part of energy interventions, to avoid perpetuating existing discriminatory gendered structures within households and communities.<sup>88</sup> In the absence of explicitly addressing and challenging gender roles, it cannot be presumed that increased access to electricity itself will benefit women and contribute to transformation of gender roles.<sup>89</sup> In addition, while a focus on energy access in households is of course critical, not least also in terms of recognising urban-rural dimensions of energy access, with many rural households being excluded from connection to national grids and energy access, a correlative focus on gender and women's participation in energy governance is lacking. This means that gendered power dynamics in spaces such as energy infrastructure ownership, decisions regarding foreign direct investment in large-scale renewable energy projects, and policy-making on energy provision and transition, are not sufficiently accounted for.<sup>90</sup>

Furthermore, the often instrumental presentation of women's participation and 'empowerment' as ways of advancing economic growth, are deeply problematic from a feminist perspective.<sup>91</sup> In short, arguments in favour of increasing women's participation in energy transition governance and decision-making, are often premised on a conception of 'development' that remains within a neoliberal economic growth paradigm.<sup>92</sup> Within this, arguments for women's participation rest on essentialist notions, such as that women's participation should be increased because they make more sustainable and ethical decisions in energy governance.<sup>93</sup> Such arguments neglect the fact that our current economic system continues to be divided into the productive sphere (all the goods and services traded on the market) and the reproductive sphere (care work and ecological processes that are essential for the productive sphere but invisible on the market). One effect is that the gendered distribution of care work and the extensive care work performed by women (paid and unpaid) is not sufficiently recognised, which also plays into why they may be unable to participate in decision-making or may benefit less from renewable energy projects. As noted by authors such as Listo, perpetuation of such neoliberal discourses does little to expose and challenge gender relations and associated power structures more fundamentally.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Bell,

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<sup>87</sup> Wiese, note 86, 203; Kooijman-van Dijk, note 85, 92; Ojong, note 86, 8; Makan, note 85, 196.

<sup>88</sup> Oliver W Johnson, Vanessa Gerber and Cassilde Muhoza, 'Gender, Culture and Energy Transitions in Rural Africa' (2019) 49 *Energy Research & Social Science* 169, 176.

<sup>89</sup> Wiese, note 86, 204, 208; Kooijman-van Dijk, note 85, 92, 98; Listo, note 85, 14; Johnson, Gerber and Muhoza, note 88, 169, 177.

<sup>90</sup> Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 6; Makan, note 85, 189.

<sup>91</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19, 1–2; Listo, note 85, 9, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19, 1–2; Listo, note 85, 9.

<sup>93</sup> Eric Evans Osei Opoku, Nana Kwabena Kufuor and Sylvester Adasi Manu, 'Gender, Electricity Access, Renewable Energy Consumption and Energy Efficiency' (2021) 173:121121 *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 1, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Listo, note 85.

Daggett and Labuski suggest that the current technocratic approach to energy systems within the exponential economic growth paradigm perpetuates 'unsustainable energy cultures', calling instead for 'feminist energy futures' that would fundamentally question and challenge such parameters.<sup>95</sup>

Within the literature on energy justice, which is written predominantly by male authors, we found only very few examples of authors focusing specifically on gender, or examples of articles adopting an explicitly feminist analysis.<sup>96</sup> That being said, some interesting exceptions are worth highlighting.

Taking an empirical approach, Wiese applied a gendered reading of energy justice in the context of community-based micro-hydropower cooperatives in Ethiopia to expose the need to delve deeper into procedural justice elements to examine women's participation.<sup>97</sup> Studying four cooperatives, she found that even where women participated in the projects, they had limited opportunity to actually influence the decisions being made due to cultural norms and practices that influenced their willingness and ability to speak and access information about the decisions being taken.<sup>98</sup> Drawing on the principle of recognition provided a space for the analysis to show specific instances of non-recognition of women in the projects, such as non-availability of special training for women on the use of electricity and lack of integration of women's needs during project design, resulting in shortcomings of the projects overall, with the finding that access to electricity at the household level and inclusion of women in the cooperatives did not translate into their voices or needs being reflected.<sup>99</sup> Wiese concludes that energy justice was a helpful framing to reveal who is benefitting and to what extent, and who is participating and who is being recognised, but that the concept still needs to be further conceptualised and linked with other justice issues to account for gendered and intersectional dimensions of energy justice.<sup>100</sup>

Looking at gender in the context of energy policy, Feenstra and Özerol take point of departure in the observation that gender-energy nexus research lacks the conceptual basis to analyse energy policies from a justice perspective. To address this gap, they propose a conceptual framework that brings together the three tenets of energy justice with three gender policy discourses – women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming and social inclusion.<sup>101</sup> They argue that bringing gender justice and energy justice objectives closer together can contribute to the future development of analytical and decision-making application in energy research and policy that is more gender just. Among other things, the authors propose that power asymmetries in decision-making need to be addressed by moving beyond numerical representation to focus on actual

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<sup>95</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19, 1–2.

<sup>96</sup> Romy Listo points to a similar gap in terms of feminist analysis in research and practice on the gender-energy nexus overall: Listo, note 85, 9.

<sup>97</sup> Wiese, note 86, 194.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 205.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 207–8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>101</sup> Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 1.

influence in decision-making.<sup>102</sup> They furthermore suggest that a gender-just energy policy must acknowledge that women and men may have different needs, create access to energy technologies and services that match those realities, and recognises women's and men's rights in policy processes by providing them an enabling environment for equal participation.<sup>103</sup> Similar to Wiese, they argue that a gendered energy justice framing could be helpful for exposing gender injustices, in their case in the space of energy policy-making, but also note that further application in practice is needed as well as the development of indicators to assess energy policies from an integrated gender justice and energy justice perspective.<sup>104</sup>

While not framed explicitly under the ambit of energy justice, Bell, Daggett and Labuski's article on 'feminist energy systems' also makes an interesting contribution, taking an explicitly feminist approach with many links to the tenets and principles of energy justice.<sup>105</sup> The authors point out that to date in energy studies, gender-related research has focused narrowly on 'women's issues', such as women's access to energy, representation in the workforce or disproportionate harm women experience, and sometimes extending to consideration of how gender norms can influence perceptions pertaining to these domains.<sup>106</sup> They point out that while these aspects are critical, they miss a broader approach as the focus on women represents just one dimension of what feminism can bring to the study of energy.<sup>107</sup> They posit that the critical contribution of feminist theory is that it 'also offers *expertise in the study of power* more broadly', which could be applicable to the full spectrum of energy research.<sup>108</sup> They suggest that a feminist approach could offer a paradigm for designing truly just energy systems, across political, economic, socio-ecological and technological domains.

Addressing the dearth of feminist analysis in literature and practice on the gender-energy nexus, Listo presents a critical discourse analysis of energy poverty literature to problematise 'gender myths' found therein.<sup>109</sup> Listo defines gender myths as essentialisms made about women and gender that are turned into sweeping generalisations, thereby producing power by 'creating orthodoxy and legitimacy, through which resources and action are directed to achieve or support particular development projects, outcomes or ideologies.'<sup>110</sup> She points to compelling examples such as focus on female-headed households obscuring focus on structural causes of poverty, or how constructions of women and gender make particular technical energy interventions such as cookstoves or electricity provision seem logical, denying the complexities of existing evidence around such interventions and the need for more holistic or alternative approaches.<sup>111</sup> She summarises four gender myths: (1) energy

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<sup>102</sup> Feenstra and Özerol, note 18, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>105</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. See also Listo, note 85, 12.

<sup>107</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 1, emphasis original.

<sup>109</sup> Listo, note 85, 10.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 11.

poor women are a homogenous vulnerable group; (2) energy saves, modernises and empowers women; (3) that gender inequality and women's poverty is a result of energy poverty and therefore resolvable with energy interventions; and (4) that energy empowers women, denying the depoliticised approach that defines women's empowerment in terms of income generation, productivity and commercial activities, rather than broader notions of human flourishing predicated on collective action and social connectedness.<sup>112</sup>

Building on these existing feminist insights, we argue that while an energy justice framing certainly has potential for guiding further research and practice on women's participation in the energy transition in the region, this can only be the case if it is interpreted, further developed and applied through an explicitly feminist lens. A strong focus on exposing and transforming the gendered power relations at play must be integral to such an approach. We are in agreement with scholars such as Bell, Daggett and Labuski who suggest that 'a feminist perspective on energy research can reach far beyond simply providing a lens for understanding gender inequalities as they relate to energy production, use, or policy-making. Feminist scholarship provides a means for understanding how power works more broadly'.<sup>113</sup> The role that intersectional feminist leadership could play in such re-visioning of energy systems warrants attention.

A feminist interpretation of energy justice could embark from the starting point of centralising the importance of attention to gender relations within each element of the energy justice framework, thereby making transformations in gender relations an integral part of the overall objective of energy justice. Interpreting energy justice through such more explicitly feminist aims could open possibilities for analysing and transforming power relations that underpin current energy decision-making at the policy, community, household and individual level.<sup>114</sup> Focusing on gender relations within the household, individual empowerment and women's participation at the policy level would be given more attention, incidentally shedding light on the root causes of gender injustices. The instrumental focus on women's participation by which increased access to energy for women at the household level is equated simplistically to women's empowerment would be brought into question. Relatedly, the existing neoliberal paradigm in which enhanced energy access is primarily seen as a precondition for economic growth rather than social justice, would be challenged.

To contribute to visioning what a feminist approach to energy justice might look like, we have mapped the three-tenets and 10-principles energy justice frameworks against the gender gaps identified in the literature and have proposed initial statements as to how a feminist framing of the different justice elements might be developed (see Table 1, below). In so doing, we build on the suggestions put forward in the nascent literature addressing gender and feminism in the context of energy justice.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> <sup>112</sup> Listo, note 85, 12–6.

<sup>113</sup> Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19, 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> E.g., Bell, Daggett and Labuski, note 19; Listo, note 85; Wiese, note 86; Feenstra and Özerol, note 18.

Three Tenets of Energy Justice	Ten Energy Justice Principles	Gender Gaps	Developing a Feminist Approach
<p><b>Distributional justice</b> is concerned with how the benefits and burdens of energy policy implementation are shared across society, i.e. who pays, who benefits and why.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global energy system is fundamentally unequal, <b>where technologies and resources are located and who can access them</b></li> <li>- Equitable distribution of benefits <b>between developers and communities and within communities</b>; intracommunity differences and power dynamics</li> <li>- When in the energy system inequalities manifest, i.e. taking a <b>whole of system approach</b> that considers the application of energy justice at each activity in the energy lifecycle; as well as <b>temporal variations</b>, such as potential impacts on future generations</li> </ul> <p>Evaluative: <i>Where</i> are the injustices? Normative: How should we <i>solve</i> them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Cosmopolitan justice stresses that the three tenets must apply universally across the globe</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Availability:</b> People deserve sufficient energy resources of high quality</li> <li>- <b>Affordability:</b> All people, including the poor, should pay no more than 10% of their income for energy services</li> <li>- <b>Sustainability:</b> Energy resources should not be depleted too quickly</li> <li>- <b>Responsibility:</b> All nations have a responsibility to protect the natural environment and minimise energy-related environmental threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gender dynamics in terms of energy use and access insufficiently considered in energy transition governance frameworks at local and national levels</li> <li>- Women’s reliance on energy at household and community levels not addressed at root cause</li> <li>- Gender dynamics within households (including unequal distribution of care work) insufficiently considered</li> <li>- Gendered power dynamics in community-company negotiations warrant further attention</li> <li>- Gendered aspects of North-South dynamics in energy system warrants further attention, broadening analysis of energy poverty to system analysis</li> <li>- Disconnect between mini/micro grid agendas and international energy transition/just transition discourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A feminist approach to distributional justice would include greater consideration of gender dynamics within households and a focus on women’s empowerment and agency at the individual level, as well as challenging gender dynamics, i.e., rather than looking at providing women with clean cooking equipment, this approach would prompt questions about why women are doing the cooking and challenge the gendered division of labour and care.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to distributional justice would demand sufficient gender analysis to inform energy transition governance frameworks, such as energy policies, ministries and initiatives, to ensure proper consideration of potential differentiated impacts on diverse women and men in energy-related decision-making, e.g. such as decisions regarding whether to focus on large-scale renewable efforts to electrify a country (which might be more likely to benefit large-scale industry), compared to small-scale renewable efforts (which might be more likely to reach rural populations, in which those that are most marginalised may be located).</li> <li>- A feminist approach to distributional justice would challenge the common narrative that the transfer of Global North renewable energy technologies, in particular in the form of large-scale infrastructure through foreign direct investment, <i>per se</i> contributes to the reduction of energy poverty in the Global South; relatedly challenging the narrative that women are the greatest beneficiaries, as they are over-represented in those suffering from energy poverty.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to distributional justice would require mapping gender-related risks and opportunities at each stage of the renewable energy lifecycle and situate gender impacts as a core risk factor for the promotion/demotion of specific renewable technologies/projects in different national and geographic locations, e.g. women workers in factories producing solar panels, sexual and gender-based violence in rare earth minerals mining communities, indigenous women’s access to cultural heritage during operational windfarms, environmental pollution during decommissioning of a geothermal plant.</li> </ul>

Three Tenets of Energy Justice	Ten Energy Justice Principles	Gender Gaps	Developing a Feminist Approach
<p><b>Recognitional justice</b> requires identifying where inequalities emerge, including to identify groups who are misrepresented or discriminated against as a result of policy outcomes due to their views, social standing, cultural background or gender.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns <b>access to decision-making processes</b> that govern the distributions and <b>engagement of all stakeholders in a non-discriminatory way</b></li> <li>- A call for <b>equitable procedures</b></li> <li>- Requires going beyond merely recognising that parts of society will unfairly suffer from the distribution of inequalities from the energy system; decision-makers must <b>focus on identifying where precisely these injustices occur and who may be marginalised and excluded</b></li> </ul> <p>Evaluative: <i>Who</i> is ignored?  Normative: How should we <i>recognise</i>?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Intragenerational equity:</b> All people have a right to fairly access energy services</li> <li>- <b>Intergenerational equity:</b> Future generations have a right to enjoy a good life undisturbed by the damage our energy systems inflict on the world today</li> <li>- <b>Respect:</b> Intersectional differences in knowledge and epistemic upbringing, culture and experience, and race and gender have to be respected in energy decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women insufficiently involved in energy transition governance frameworks at local and national levels</li> <li>- Women insufficiently engaged by companies in the context of renewable energy projects</li> <li>- Discourse and practice on 'women' in the energy transition by and large fails to take an intersectional approach and sometimes even contributes to building and perpetuating 'gender myths' that essentialise and instrumentalise women and their participation in the energy transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A feminist approach to recognitional justice would demand greater involvement of women, women's organisations and their representatives in the development and implementation of energy governance frameworks, such as energy policies at the national level, in the ministries that have responsibilities for implementing such policies or measuring their effectiveness, or in the negotiation teams and investment centres that grant rights to renewable energy foreign direct investments; this could include developing targets and quotas to increase women's participation in specific decision-making roles and structures.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to recognitional justice would demand greater engagement by companies with women and women's organisations and representatives in negotiations and arrangements regarding the development of renewable energy infrastructure in different locations, to ensure that their views, rights and interests are properly considered in location selection, project design and implementation. This would necessarily involve attention to the unequal distribution of care and domestic work shouldered by women, as part of enabling their greater participation.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to recognitional justice would require thorough, participatory gender-responsive analysis and stakeholder mapping to inform any policy or project-level energy transition decision-making, to identify how different social groups and individuals are likely to be impacted by a certain energy transition decision, policy or project.</li> </ul>

Three Tenets of Energy Justice	Ten Energy Justice Principles	Gender Gaps	Developing a Feminist Approach
<p><b>Procedural justice</b> is concerned with an open and fair decision-making process through a demand for both formal and informal forms of involvement in energy decision-making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Access to information and meaningful participation in decision-making</b></li> <li>- <b>Lack of bias on the part of decision-makers</b></li> <li>- <b>Access to legal processes for achieving redress</b></li> <li>- Focus goes beyond calling for inclusion in decision-making, to also include <b>demands for more equitable outcomes; changes in culture, norms and values</b> may be necessary for such changes to occur</li> </ul> <p>Evaluative: Is there a fair <i>process</i>? Normative: Which new processes to <i>develop</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Restorative justice</b> is advanced as a way of ensuring that energy justice is applied in policy, that is, to strengthen the practical application of the concept, thereby forcing decision-makers to engage with injustices caused by energy projects and to rectify them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Due process:</b> Countries should respect due process and human rights in their production and use of energy</li> <li>- <b>Transparency and accountability:</b> All people should have access to high-quality information about energy and the environment and fair, transparent and accountable forms of energy decision-making</li> <li>- <b>Resistance:</b> Energy injustices must be actively and deliberately opposed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nepotism and corruption driven by (often male) elites continue to have a powerful influence on energy transition decision-making and governance</li> <li>- Problematic power dynamics (across and within gender and race specifically) in international interactions in the energy transition</li> <li>- Limited integration into energy transition of non-Western philosophical thinking that may be more aligned with some women's perspectives and experiences, e.g. indigenous feminist perspectives on human relations to the natural world and natural resources</li> <li>- Limited focus on access to remedy when compared to environmental justice and climate justice discourses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A feminist approach to procedural justice would include greater attention to the role and impact of nepotism, corruption and political elites in global energy transition dynamics and decision-making, including in North-South relations, as a part of demanding more transformative changes that identify and challenge current patriarchal and neoliberal structures underpinning the global energy system.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to procedural justice would involve innovation in the development and implementation of equitable and gender-responsive procedures for sharing information and making decisions regarding the energy transition, e.g. identifying and exposing gender biases in existing decision-making processes, drawing on different philosophical thinking for the development of decision-making procedures, developing measures to meaningfully engage different types of women in decision-making, providing the necessary support to marginalised or under-represented women to participate in decision-making.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to procedural justice would develop alternative possibilities for structuring and exercising energy infrastructure ownership, e.g. different models of benefit sharing and community ownership.</li> <li>- A feminist approach to procedural justice would involve significantly strengthening the focus on access to remedy in relation to energy transition decision-making, including in relation to the impacts of specific renewable energy projects; this increased focus on remedy could be usefully informed by developments from the business and human rights field as well as climate justice space.</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Developing a feminist approach to energy justice (columns 1-2 summarise the two energy justice frameworks elaborated by scholars to date; column 3 some of the key gender gaps identified in the energy justice and gender-energy nexus literature; and column 4 presents our own analysis building on these sources)

## CHAPTER 4

# 4 A FEMINIST ENERGY JUSTICE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ENERGY TRANSITION POLICY-MAKING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In this part of the paper, we look at how gender and women's participation are addressed in renewable energy policies and policy-making in Sub-Saharan Africa, to identify gaps and explore how a feminist energy justice approach might contribute to addressing these. Our analysis is based on the literature review and our exploratory feminist approach to energy justice outlined above, through which we identified select examples of policies at the regional and national level that address gender in the context of the energy transition. As such, our observations are illustrative rather than conclusive, and more comprehensive research and analysis into a broader set of energy transition policies and policy-making processes in the region would be beneficial.

### 4.1 WOMEN IN ENERGY POLICY DECISION-MAKING

A persistent challenge remains the lack of representation of women in the energy workforce, including in decision-making spaces and governance institutions.<sup>116</sup> Women's participation in energy policy decision-making is vital as part of ensuring that such policies reflect the lived realities of women in the energy transition. Furthermore, analysis of gendered power dynamics in energy policy-making must be a first step in challenging gendered disparities and lack of attention to persistent issues of discrimination and exclusion. In Sub-Saharan Africa, in 2018 only four out of 56 (or 7%) positions of lead energy sector ministers were women.<sup>117</sup> This means women are not only under-represented but also that there is a lack of female role models and mentors, which has been identified as critical for strengthening women's participation in policy-making.<sup>118</sup> That women are insufficiently involved in energy transition governance is a key concern for realising recognitional justice. Exclusion of women from policy-making also has the consequence of failing to integrate valuable input to foster inclusive and responsive policies, thereby implicating distributional and procedural justice elements.

Research has shown that strengthening women's participation at the decision-making level has positively affected communities' health and well-being because of increased

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<sup>116</sup> This information was provided during an online roundtable on the rights of women and girls in the energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa convened in October 2021 by the DIHR.

<sup>117</sup> Prebble and Rojas, note 24, 13.

<sup>118</sup> Pearl-Martinez and Stephens, note 21, 2.



consideration for reducing time-poverty.<sup>119</sup> In the energy sector specifically, it has been observed that women’s leadership increases ‘pro-environmental corporate actions, profitability, and improves inclusive decision-making and cross-sector collaboration.’<sup>120</sup> Women are more likely to take decisions that halve carbon dioxide emissions as well as set aside protected land areas.<sup>121</sup> Without wanting to essentialise or instrumentalise women’s participation, these are positive indications that stronger participation of women in energy policy decision-making can make significant contributions to generating more equitable distribution of benefits and outcomes, thereby strengthening distributional and procedural justice elements.

## 4.2 GENDER IN ENERGY POLICIES

Attention to gender in energy policies in Sub-Saharan Africa is significant. In 2017, the International Union for Conservation of Nature conducted a worldwide study of energy policy frameworks to analyse whether they included gender considerations. It found that, out of the 192 analysed frameworks, the majority of those including gender were from Sub-Saharan Africa (32 frameworks, representing 56%).<sup>122</sup> In terms of specific examples, at the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Centre for Renewable Energy Efficiency adopted the first gender-responsive energy policy on the continent in 2017. The ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access acknowledges the gendered impacts of climate change and energy governance and recognises the existing gaps in the energy (renewable and non-renewable) sector at the policy, supplier and consumer levels.<sup>123</sup> The policy also has an implementation strategy with guiding principles to ensure gender-responsiveness and maps the relevant stakeholders to drive implementation.<sup>124</sup> Drawing lessons from the ECOWAS Gender Policy, the Clean Energy Solutions Center developed the Blueprint Guide for Creating Gender-Sensitive Energy Policies in 2019.<sup>125</sup> The guide aims to support governments wishing to make the energy sector more gender-responsive by learning from the ECOWAS Gender Policy process.<sup>126</sup> At the country level, Nigeria’s 2013 National Energy Policy brings attention to gender-specific energy-related needs in the household, underlining women’s role in the sector.<sup>127</sup> The Senegalese Renewable Energy Policy included women as a target group as a direct consequence of the Minister for

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<sup>119</sup> Johnson, Gerber and Muhoza, note 88, 176–7.

<sup>120</sup> SEFORALL, ‘Putting Women at the Forefront of the Sustainable Energy Movement’, <https://www.seforall.org/news/putting-women-at-the-forefront-of-the-sustainable-energy-movement> (accessed 5 April 2022).

<sup>121</sup> Pearl-Martinez and Stephens, note 21, 4.

<sup>122</sup> Prebble and Rojas, note 24.

<sup>123</sup> ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (2017) 9–11.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–31.

<sup>125</sup> Ellen Morris, Jennye Greene and Victoria Healey, *Blueprint Guide for Creating Gender-Sensitive Energy Policies* (Pittsburgh: Clean Energy Solutions Center, 2019).

<sup>126</sup> Monica Maduekwe et al, ‘Gender Equity and Mainstreaming in Renewable Energy Policies—Empowering Women in the Energy Value Chain in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)’ (2019) 6 *Current Sustainable/Renewable Energy Reports* 13, 3.

<sup>127</sup> Lauren Clark, ‘Powering Households and Empowering Women: The Gendered Effects of Electrification in Sub-Saharan Africa’, *Princeton University Journal of Public & International Affairs* (5 May 2021), <https://jpi.princeton.edu/news/powering-households-and-empowering-women-gendered-effects-electrification-sub-saharan-africa> (accessed 20 March 2022).

Renewable Energy having been a member of the gender audit team.<sup>128</sup> The Kenyan Ministry of Energy launched its Gender Policy in 2019,<sup>129</sup> making it the first African country to adopt a national policy on gender mainstreaming and gender responsiveness in the energy sector.<sup>130</sup> These developments are commendable but opportunities to strengthen all three energy justice elements can also be identified.

#### 4.3 RECOGNITIONAL JUSTICE

The above policy examples can satisfy recognitional justice requirements in that they acknowledge women as a group that has been left out of renewable energy governance, both in terms of policy content and policy-making processes. However, while women and/or gender are considered as the object of these policies, the policies do not consistently address the issue of women's participation in the design process. Ministries and government agencies specialising in women's issues or gender may be designated as implementing entities but frequently these are not headed by or constituted by many women. Sometimes, women's organisations are targeted as additional entities for facilitating implementation, but the degree of involvement, participation and decision-making in the implementation phase is not detailed.

Authors such as Maduekwe et al commend the share of women in relevant ministries,<sup>131</sup> while others, like Wamukonya, warn against practices such as favouritism, nepotism and 'rubber-stamping'.<sup>132</sup> The belief that increasing women's participation in policy-making will necessarily positively affect women within a community, country or region is overly simplistic.<sup>133</sup> While clearly not constituting a silver bullet, greater participation of diverse groups of women with diverse interests, including women's organisations and their representatives, in the development and implementation of energy policies is an essential component of living up to the recognitional expectations of energy justice.

Looking at intersectional diversity is a further integral component of recognitional justice, understanding that women's participation faces issues of socio-cultural domination in patriarchal societies; non-recognition of their concerns as women but also considering other potential layers of marginalisation and misrecognition through stereotyping and/or homogenisation.<sup>134</sup> In terms of delving deeper into recognitional justice elements, the ECOWAS Gender Policy is interesting as it looks precisely beyond recognising that parts of society will unfairly suffer from distribution of inequalities but focuses specifically on identifying where those injustices occur and who may be

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<sup>128</sup> Joy S Clancy and Nthabiseng Mohlakoana, 'Gender Audits: An Approach to Engendering Energy Policy in Nepal, Kenya and Senegal' (2020) 62:101378 *Energy Research & Social Science* 1, 6.

<sup>129</sup> Ministry of Energy Gender Policy 2019 (Kenya).

<sup>130</sup> 'Kenyan Ministry of Energy Launches First National Gender Policy in the Energy Sector Ever', *ENERGIA* (11 November 2019), <https://www.energia.org/kenyan-ministry-of-energy-launches-first-national-gender-policy-in-the-energy-sector-ever/> (accessed 4 April 2022).

<sup>131</sup> Maduekwe et al, note 126.

<sup>132</sup> Wamukonya, note 12, 8.

<sup>133</sup> This information was provided during an online interview with a gender and energy expert conducted in April 2022.

<sup>134</sup> David Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) cited in Jenkins, note 42, 87.

marginalised and excluded. For example, the policy recognises that poor and rural women are more affected by discrimination in energy governance and addresses the ways in which policies can positively influence patriarchal social norms that have excluded women from policy and project design as well as the workforce.<sup>135</sup>

#### **4.4 DISTRIBUTIONAL JUSTICE**

Increased participation of women has the potential to generate policies that demonstrate a better understanding of the gender-related dynamics of the energy transition, thereby contributing to fulfilling the distributional tenet of energy justice. Here, the involvement of relevant women's organisations providing education on gender and discrimination within social and cultural norms could be particularly relevant. Conversely, the failure to undertake more advanced gender analyses of projects and policies on the access and use of renewable energies could mean that the transition will not be accompanied by a shift in the way women access energy and in gender dynamics at household or community level.<sup>136</sup> For example, the emphasis put on solar cookstoves as a simple means of achieving energy access for women across Sub-Saharan Africa is often refuted by practitioners who provide evidence that such projects do not actually benefit women as users if the beneficiaries are not involved in the project design.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, the interpretation that electrification per se will lead to women's empowerment and contribute to their autonomy has been refuted if it is not accompanied by gender-responsive energy policies and project design.<sup>138</sup> Strengthening attention to gendered dynamics within households, including the gendered division of labour, could be an invaluable contribution of a feminist framing of the distributional justice element.

Relatedly, questions of distribution more broadly could lead to more gender-responsive decision-making regarding how to balance focus on large-scale, small-scale, on-grid and off-grid renewable energy efforts in terms of gendered access, availability and development implications. The dominant focus on the rapid deployment of large-scale renewable technologies may need to be nuanced, in particular its ability to contribute to equitable reduction of energy poverty. Furthermore, a feminist framing of the distributional element of energy justice would demand attention to gender implications at each stage of the energy lifecycle. For instance, increasing attention to women beyond impact assessment to also consider women's participation and rights in areas such as company-community negotiations, investment decision-making and women's access to remedy for harms caused by renewable energy projects.

#### **4.5 PROCEDURAL JUSTICE**

Procedural justice concerns remain with regard to who is involved and who is allowed to meaningfully participate in all stages of policy-making. The Blueprint Guide for Creating Gender-Sensitive Energy Policies, for instance, while useful in terms of gender-sensitive

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<sup>135</sup> ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (2017), 14–5.

<sup>136</sup> This information was provided during an online roundtable on the rights of women and girls in the energy transition in Sub-Saharan Africa convened in October 2021 by the DIHR.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> See e.g., Johnson, Gerber and Muhoza, note 88.

content of energy policies, says little to nothing on women's participation in the policy development process. Indeed, a concern that has only grown with the increasing demand for gender responsiveness and women's participation in energy policy-making is the evaporation of gender in those policy documents, wherein policy commitments to gender equality tend to disappear or not manifest once they reach the implementation stage because of a lack of financial and technical capacity.<sup>139</sup> This focus on procedural justice, including the focus on decision-making, decision-makers and actual outcomes, was also reflected in the 2017 IUCN study, which described the Sub-Saharan African region as leading in terms of integration of gender into national energy frameworks, but also suggested that countries should 'develop gender action plans specific to their energy sector policies, include clear targets and objectives, and elaborate on the steps a country can take ... to ensure gender mainstreaming is tangible in a country's energy work.'<sup>140</sup>

Strengthening women's participation for a just energy transition, demands fair, non-discriminatory approaches that foster meaningful participation opportunities throughout the entire policy-making process. As part of this, the structures for making decisions about the energy transition could be further examined and adjusted to become more gender-responsive by, for example: identifying and exposing gender biases in existing decision-making processes; drawing on different philosophical thinking for the development of decision-making procedures; and developing measures to meaningfully engage different types of women in decision-making, including providing the necessary support to marginalised or under-represented women to participate in decision-making. Lastly, to satisfy the procedural justice element, the focus on open and fair decision-making would also need to include a clearer focus on access to remedy and redress, not currently well covered in the policies. Increased attention to benefit sharing models and opportunities for community ownership could also be explored as part of strengthening procedural justice.

In conclusion, applying a feminist energy justice reading of women's participation in energy policy-making and the content of these policy examples, points to persistent gaps in terms of recognising the gender dynamics of the energy transition and fostering women's participation in the energy transition. More comprehensive gender analysis and application of a feminist approach to all three energy justice tenets could make a valuable contribution to further exposing and understanding the gendered power relations behind these gaps and provide innovative solutions for addressing them.

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<sup>139</sup> Gill Allwood, 'Gender Mainstreaming and Policy Coherence for Development: Unintended Gender Consequences and EU Policy' (2013) 39 *Women's Studies International Forum* 42, cited in Maduekwe et al, note 126, 3.

<sup>140</sup> Prebble and Rojas, note 24, 13.

# CONCLUSION

## 5 CONCLUSION

With this paper, we have sought to contribute to visioning what a feminist approach to energy justice might look like. On a more theoretical level, we mapped the three-tenets and 10-principles energy justice frameworks against the gender gaps identified in the literature, to explore how a feminist framing of the different justice elements might be further developed. Using this feminist energy justice framing, we then reflected on current approaches to women's participation in energy transition decision-making in Sub-Saharan Africa. Empirical research demonstrates that the predominant technical-economic approach to the energy transition has led to gender-neutral policies and policy-making processes that have, in fact, disproportionately and negatively impacted women and girls. Frequently, gender analysis is inhibited and women are systematically excluded from decision-making. Given the current focus on a just transition and the move towards renewable energies, a closer discussion of the role of gender and women's participation in the energy transition is therefore urgently necessary.

Our conclusion is that there is a need for more feminist and locally-contextually developed approaches to women's participation in energy transition decision-making in the region. To date, focus on gender in academic literature on energy justice remains scarce. At the same time, literature on the gender-energy nexus is often narrow in focus and insufficiently engages with broader justice questions. Frequently, the focus on women's participation remains instrumental, whereby increased access to energy for women at the household level is simplistically equated to women's empowerment more broadly. In turn, within the existing neoliberal paradigm such enhanced energy access is primarily seen as a precondition for economic growth rather than social justice. A feminist approach to energy justice, instead, directs focus to a broader set of gendered power relations that underpin current global energy systems.

In terms of energy transition policy-making, there seems to be increasing research recognising that a gender-neutral approach is insufficient and that women are frequently excluded from decision-making. While 'women's issues' and 'gender' have been addressed as topics in the substance of policy documents, gender has yet to be mainstreamed throughout processes. This partially answers to the recognitional element of energy justice, though deeper focus on intersectionality would be desirable. Distributional justice issues, however, such as those relating to access, benefits and persisting burdens shouldered by women, are far from being corrected in energy transition policy-making. To properly account for women's participation and other rights, energy transition policy-making must also answer to distributional justice challenges, whereby women and women's organisations must be involved in a fair and non-discriminatory way. Likewise, the procedural element of energy justice warrants much more attention, as current decision-making processes work to exclude women and do not sufficiently account for gender dimensions and analysis. Relatedly, as patterns of nepotism, corruption and political elitism are often insufficiently challenged, energy justice demands for more equitable outcomes remain unrealised. A feminist

energy justice approach has the potential to bring gaps such as these to the forefront of the energy transition agenda.

Critical also, is to appraise the utility of a feminist energy justice approach in terms of its ability to provide a practical guiding framework for policy-makers and other stakeholders in the region to drive actual changes towards a more equitable and sustainable energy transition. This would need to be established through further local and contextual development and application of energy justice, as well as corresponding evaluation of the effectiveness of using this framing. With a view to contributing to such investigation, we have suggested below some potential areas for further research and practice that could be explored by scholars and practitioners working with the energy transition in the region.

As a first step, a discussion roundtable could be held bringing together relevant government, civil society and academic actors with the objective of further appraising the potential of energy justice as a framework for driving the energy transition agenda in the region. This could include attention to how energy justice might be further developed in theory and practice through feminist Sub-Saharan African context framings. Building on this, pilot projects could test implementation of energy justice and its effects. This could be at project or policy level, with comparative case studies from one or multiple countries. Developing and utilising more locally-contextually refined definitions of energy justice could be a key aim. Such an approach could also involve the development of an AAAQ (availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality) model for access to energy that strongly integrates gender from the start. As part of driving initiatives to realise SDG 7, as well as moves to develop a human right to energy, the utility of an AAAQ framing for defining and implementing such initiatives might usefully be explored. Driving such an agenda from the Sub-Saharan African region, could further contribute to ensuring that objectives and targets fed into more global agendas better represent the lived realities of women and gender dynamics in the region.

Further exploration, evaluation and implementation of existing gender and energy policy frameworks could also yield invaluable insights. For example, empirical studies into the implementation and effects of leading examples such as the ECOWAS Gender Policy or country-level gender energy policies would be beneficial to understand better what does and does not work in practice, what the barriers are and how they can be addressed. Such empirical work could include a particular focus on the participation of women and women's organisations, as well as accountability aspects such as non-governmental organisation monitoring of implementation. An aim could be to feed into the development of targets and indicators for implementation tracking and monitoring, which, according to the literature, still need to be developed for some of these policies. Such practical learning could inform further refinement of critical guidance, such as the Blueprint Guide for Gender-Sensitive Energy Policies, to strengthen the focus on process as well as providing further practice examples on what does and does not work for actors engaged in energy policy decision-making. The studies could also inform regional-level peer learning, with a focus on strengthening the participation of women and women's organisations in energy transition decision-making.

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