



Commemorating
Women’s Month

Women at the Heart of the Green Economy: Advancing Social Protection for a Just Transition

Background

The month of August, recognised as Women's Month in South Africa, provides an important opportunity to acknowledge and promote women's role in building an inclusive and sustainable future. As the country progresses towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy, it is essential to ensure that women are not only protected from the risks of this transition but also empowered to lead and benefit from new opportunities in the green economy.

Although the green transition creates new opportunities for jobs, innovation, and sustainable livelihoods, it may also deepen existing gender inequalities. Women, particularly those in informal, low-income, and caregiving roles, face structural barriers such as limited access to skills training, finance, land, and formal employment.

A gender-responsive approach to a just transition involves incorporating social protection measures that are inclusive, adaptable, and future-oriented. Social protection systems - including income support, public employment programmes, and access to services - can play a transformative role in reducing vulnerability while enabling women to participate meaningfully in green sectors.

This Women's Month workshop aims to celebrate women's contributions while fostering dialogue among policymakers, researchers, civil society, and development partners to strengthen social protection and advance women’s empowerment in the green economy.

Date:
25 August 2026

Time:
14:00-15:30

Platform:
Zoom

RSVP:
[Click here](#) to register

Programme

Facilitator: Thembakazi Taki Sithole, Hightower Petroleum Africa		
14:00-14:05	Welcome and purpose of the webinar	Dr Nqobile Xaba, Open Society Foundation
14:05-14:20	Keynote Address: Why Women's Leadership is Essential for a Just Transition	Dr Notiswa Libaba, Presidential Climate Commission (PCC)
14:20-14:40	Panel Discussion: Women Leading the Green Economy – Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities	Prof Roula Inglesi-Lotz, MASSAf, University of Pretoria Ms Nondumiso Sibiya, Boomba.Mobi
14:40-15:00	Interactive Discussion and Q&A	All
15:00-15:05	Key Messages and Closing Remarks	Ms Thembakazi Taki Sithole

Speakers



Thembakazi Taki Sithole is a strategic partnerships and ecosystem development executive with multidisciplinary experience spanning African market development, infrastructure and energy, commercial strategy, stakeholder engagement and emerging technology. Her career has focused on building cross-sector partnerships and stakeholder ecosystems across corporate, government and international environments, with experience spanning South Africa and wider African markets. She has held senior leadership roles across energy, strategic advisory, commercial development and project delivery, including leading strategic development and stakeholder engagement for a Pan-African energy venture focused on petroleum infrastructure and emerging hydrogen solutions. Thembakazi has also served as Managing Director and equity partner in a 100% Black female-owned investment and strategic advisory business, facilitating African partnerships for global companies. Her experience includes youth economic participation, enterprise development, national stakeholder programmes and women-focused leadership initiatives. Through her role with She Leads NPC, she supports strategic partnerships, stakeholder engagement and fundraising for women's leadership and empowerment initiatives. With a foundation in civil engineering, project management, entrepreneurship and strategic communication, she brings a multidisciplinary perspective to conversations on sustainable development, economic participation and Africa's evolving green economy.



Dr Nqobile Xaba is a South African researcher, academic, and policy specialist with expertise in energy transitions, sustainable development, and mineral resource governance. She currently serves as Programme Manager for Resources Futures in Africa at the Open Society Foundations, where her work focuses on advancing equitable and sustainable approaches to Africa's energy and industrial future. Dr Xaba has extensive experience in research and higher education, having previously worked with the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and the Tshwane University of Technology. Her research interests include the just energy transition, critical minerals, climate policy, battery technologies, and sustainable industrialisation in Africa. She holds a PhD in Chemistry from the University of the Western Cape, as well as postgraduate qualifications from the North-West University. Dr Xaba has contributed to several policy and research publications focused on Africa's developmental pathways, energy security, and low-carbon futures



Dr Notiswa Libala is the Senior Manager: Just Transition in the Secretariat of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC). In this role, she is responsible for the Just Transition portfolio, which includes projects such as the Partnering Implementation Model, social ownership of renewable energy initiatives, and economic diversification efforts, among others. Notiswa holds a PhD in Water Resource Science from Rhodes University and brings over 10 years of experience in water resource management. Her expertise includes participatory governance, stakeholder engagement, partnership development, sustainability, and facilitation. Previously, Notiswa served as the Programme Lead for Water Resilience at the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership. In this capacity, she focused on enhancing water resilience in the Western Cape Water Supply System (WCWSS), supported the implementation of the City of Cape Town's Climate Change Action Plan and developed the Partnering Implementation Model for the PCC. Additionally, she worked as a lead stakeholder engagement consultant for the Global Water Partnership, providing technical support on water governance. Notiswa was also a researcher with the Africa Research Universities Alliance's Water Centre of Excellence, where she contributed to a joint transdisciplinary project funded by the UK government, engaging stakeholders from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United Kingdom.



Professor Roula Inglesi-Lotz is a Professor of Economics at the University of Pretoria and holder of the DSTI-NRF South African Research Chair in Just Energy Transition, a bilateral Chair between the University of Pretoria and RWTH Aachen University. She is the founder and head of the University's Energy Economics Research Unit. She is a C1 NRF-rated researcher and was elected as a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa in 2025. In 2024, she received the South African National Energy Association's Upliftment through Education Award in recognition of her contribution to energy education and capacity development. Professor Inglesi-Lotz serves as Vice President for Membership and Affiliate Relations of the International Association for Energy Economics and is actively involved in leading international academic and policy networks. She has published extensively in the fields of energy economics, climate policy, energy poverty and sustainable development, and has supervised numerous postgraduate researchers. She is also the editor of the Handbook on Energy Transitions in Africa, to be published next month. Her work focuses particularly on the economic and social dimensions of Africa's energy transition and on translating rigorous research into practical policy solutions.



Nondumiso Sibiya is a 28-year-old eco-entrepreneur and activist born and raised in Diepsloot township. Driven by a passion for youth engagement and environmental justice, she began her eight-year business journey in 2018 as the co-founder of Boomba.mobi. Over this time, she built strong skills in developing business systems, leading research and development, and co-creating machinery to simplify daily operations. In November 2023, Nondumiso took on a new role as the Bontle Ke Tlhago Cooperative Director of a recyclables buy-back centre based in Diepsloot. In this position, she leads practical community solutions across waste collection, recycling, composting, and tackling issues like illegal dumping and food waste. As a dedicated activist, Nondumiso works to protect the community's right to a clean and healthy environment. She focuses on building cooperative, mutually beneficial systems that local residents willingly embrace and run as their own.