

Just Transition in the international development cooperation context



# JUST TRANSITION

IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION CONTEXT



**UNION  
TO UNION**  
LO, TCO & SACO GLOBAL



**JUST  
TRANSITION  
CENTRE**

DECENT JOBS ON A LIVING PLANET

## **Just Transition in the international development cooperation context Report**

Based on the study commissioned by *Union to Union* and written by the Just Transition Centre with additional research and interviews conducted by *Union to Union*.

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**UNION  
TO UNION**

LO, TCO & SACO SWEDEN



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# Foreword

We are living a new situation – the COVID-19 health pandemic has affected us all. In addition to the loss of lives, it has brought a tough challenge to health systems worldwide and led to massive job losses and reduced income opportunities. We need to look forward; we need to build back better. Building better means taking the opportunity to design a greener and just recovery for the world of work. If the current crisis has demonstrated one thing, it is that vulnerable groups pay a higher price in crisis and transitional processes.

If climate change is to be treated as the crisis that it is, implementation of plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will need to be accelerated. We know that those efforts will affect the world of work. We at *Union to Union* believe that working on ensuring a just transition can enhance climate ambition. Our own ambition is to contribute to a world with social and economic justice that is also environmentally sustainable. Just transition can provide that pathway to social justice on a living planet. It gives us the opportunity to create good jobs and to address climate change. In the past, there have been discussions about the world needing to choose between creating jobs and growth on one hand or respecting the environment on the other. Today it is clear that these choices are not mutually exclusive. The necessary transition is not only about phasing out polluting industries, but also about creating new jobs, skills and investments and an opportunity for a more equal and sustainable economy.

Just transition is a concept that was born out of the trade union movement, and after several years of advocacy work, it was included in the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate change (UNFCCC). It was further developed as guidelines adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and it is discussed within the international community. In a nutshell, just transition is about protecting workers and communities affected by this necessary transition so that economies can generate lower emissions and have less environmental impact. It allows for improvements to the environment to be

combined with addressing development challenges, poverty and inequalities – leaving no one behind. Focusing on just transition is key to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*Union to Union* believes that more information is needed on the development perspective of a just transition. There is a knowledge gap on how to design policies and how trade unions are agents of change regarding climate action. We have therefore elaborated this report together with the Just Transition Centre.

The scale of the challenges when dealing with climate change is significant in low- and middle-income countries. Vibrant trade union engagement is central for a just transition. Enabling good working conditions requires cooperation between different actors. This publication provides examples on how trade unions are engaging in just transition, how it relates to international development cooperation and provides guidance on how to move forward and strengthen the work for a just transition.

Finally, I would like to extend a big thank you to everyone that is engaged in the trade union work, including the trade union development cooperation, and those who contribute on a daily basis to a world of social justice and dignified working conditions. We are part of the world's largest movement for democracy – and we are needed more than ever!

Sofia Östmark, Secretary General, *Union to Union*



Sofia Östmark, Secretary General, *Union to Union*

PHOTO: STEFAN TELL



Bhagavatiben Girdharbhai Solanki, member of Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA). PHOTO: DAVID LUNDMARK

# Executive Summary

The current health crisis has demonstrated how often vulnerable groups pay a higher price during economic shocks or societal transformation. The COVID-19 health pandemic has accelerated trends in the world of work, for better or worse. Massive losses of working hours, workers who suddenly have found themselves unemployed and had to walk long distances to go back home<sup>1</sup> and workers in the informal economy facing dramatic income losses as well as high exposure to health and safety risks. There are encouraging developments such as companies extending services to local communities and governments extending social protection schemes. Meantime, trade unions have taken the lead in outreach activities to raise awareness about COVID-19 impacts in the workplace and at home such as increased rates of domestic violence.

Efforts to advance environmental sustainability will also disrupt the world of work. These are related to three main transformations that will take place if countries are to achieve what was committed to under the Paris Agreement: *jobs will be transformed, jobs will be lost and jobs will be created.*

There are examples that it is possible to create decent work while promoting better practices to safeguard the environment. Should emissions reductions integrate just transition framework analysis, it would allow for an advancement towards socially just and environmentally sound societies. It would make it possible to take advantage of employment creation potential, e.g., within ecosystem restoration and in efficient use of natural resources. It would provide the impetus for a move towards circular economies and a move away from linear economic models towards sustainable ones that take into consideration the planetary boundaries.

Just transition plans cover both measures for workers who may lose their jobs or livelihoods and measures to make sure that new green jobs are good jobs. It includes managing the phase-out or transformation of high emitting sectors and promoting the growth of low emitting sectors with decent jobs. An effective just transition plan includes measures to

diversify economies and ensure that societies are more resilient to climate change impacts, as well as measures to address these impacts.

The aim of just transition is to address environmental, social and economic issues concurrently. The Just Transition Framework provides a set of components that can be analysed (per productive sector, per country) and should be included in order to guarantee a just transition. These components are social protection, organisational health and safety policies, sectorial and active labour market policies, skills and development policies. Just transition is still a new concept in the field of international development cooperation, largely because international norms for just transition are relatively new, as are social dialogue processes focused on it. So, while there is growing awareness of the concept and an expanding field of academic and theoretical work relating to it, just transition in practice and financing possibilities for it are thus far limited.

Social partners have an important role in advancing economic and social development. Likewise they should reinforce reinforcing the role of international development cooperation for poverty eradication, the promotion of decent work and environmental sustainability.

The intention of this report is to shed light on how just transition work has been advancing in low- and middle-income countries and highlight how trade unions and development actors can enhance climate ambition. It provides examples of union responses in different productive sectors and how Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) will shift labour markets and sectorial challenges.

This report used methods such as desk review, interview and surveys. The cases studies were selected to provide a set of examples from different productive sectors and regions of the world. They link climate change with improvements in working conditions, the visibility of workers' societal roles, the key role of capacity building and the impact of social protection. They draw attention to the fact that the

necessary move towards greening our economies, if designed under a Just Transition Framework and embedded in social dialogue, can lead to transformative change. Each case study includes a brief COVID-19 impact analysis, since there are lessons learned that could be applied when working under a Just Transition Framework. However, the full extent of the profound transformations in the world of work is yet to be fully understood, and this publication aims to contribute to those ongoing processes. This report could be of use to, among others, practitioners, decision makers and policy makers in the international development cooperation community.

The international labour movement via the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Global Union Federations (GUFs), play a role in consolidating trade union positions, advocating for international policy norms, negotiating

agreements with multinational enterprises, and supporting trade unions in their efforts for basic labour rights.

*Union to Union*, as the joint international development cooperation organisation of the Swedish trade union confederations, presents in this report a set of recommendations on how development cooperation actors could integrate just transition on their agenda. It offers guidance on how international development cooperation could be channelled to enhance participation of social partners, including workers and their representatives. This report presents recommendation addressing how international development cooperation could be applied to promote interventions under a Just Transition Framework in low- and middle-income countries, and by doing so, would contribute to raising the level of climate ambition.

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## **UNION TO UNION SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED WORK ON JUST TRANSITION FROM AN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PERSPECTIVE:**

- International development cooperation actors should increase their support to trade unions, including on issues related to just transition, climate change and biodiversity
- Development actors<sup>2</sup> and trade unions should support and advocate for the incorporation of just transition strategies in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- Development actors and trade unions should support capacity building initiatives, including via online platforms, to increase knowledge on just transition, climate change and biodiversity
- Development actors, Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations and trade unions should support interventions at multiple levels that can lead to increased policy and resource coordination
- Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations and development actors should support the creation of a coordination mechanism for just transition
- Governments, development actors and social partners should ensure an environment that is beneficial to social dialogue and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes
- Social partners, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development actors should analyse the COVID-19 recovery package responses and apply lessons learned to enhance climate change action and investments for Decent Work
- Trade unions should continue to build alliances on shared objectives, not least with environmental organisations
- Social partners, development actors including civil society organisations should explore Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) as a tool to advance just transition

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A group of coal miners in Afghanistan at the end of their shift.  
PHOTO: HOSSEIN FATEMI/PANOS PICTURES

# Introduction

The year 2020 was believed to be a critical year for climate action. It was the year in which governments were to submit their national plans to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), known as the second generation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This would happen against the backdrop of 2019: it was the second warmest year on record; it brought us the Australian bushfires and hurricanes Idai and Kenneth that led to catastrophic flooding, damage and lives lost in South East Africa. It also brought the yellow vest demonstrations that were sparked by taxation for the transport sector in France. Although the above mentioned policy aimed to encourage modes of transportation with lower emissions, it was considered by demonstrators to only benefit groups in society that were already economically advantaged.

**“climate protection and adaptation investments will become a precondition for peace and stability, and will require unprecedented efforts to transform societies, economies, infrastructures and governance institutions. Still, the deep transformation implies impacts on economic sectors, firm, labour markets and trade patterns”.**<sup>4</sup>

Collectively we are not near the level of ambition for action on climate change necessary to fulfil international agreements. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has for the past ten years published yearly reports on the “difference between where we are likely to be and where we need to be”. UNEP’s Emissions Gap Report – 2019 provides us with some answers: 1) GHG have risen at a rate of 1.5 per cent per year in the last decade; 2) fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from energy use and industry dominate the total GHG emissions; 3) there is no sign of GHG emissions peaking in the next coming years.<sup>3</sup> The report clearly points out that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) need to be strengthened in 2020 and that countries must increase their NDC targets threefold in order to ensure that the increase in global temperature remains well below two degrees Celsius. Moreover, “climate protection and adaptation investments will become a precondition for peace and stability, and will require unprecedented efforts to transform societies, economies, infrastructures

and governance institutions. Still, the deep transformation implies impacts on economic sectors, firm, labour markets and trade patterns”.<sup>4</sup>

However, the year 2020 brought us yet another global crisis. COVID-19 has infected millions of people and killed hundreds of thousands. Over half the world’s population has been in lockdown to protect communities and the most vulnerable groups, with staggering impacts on working people and the poor. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that working-hour losses in the final quarter of 2020 are expected to amount to 245 million full time equivalent jobs. Youth unemployment was a challenge before the COVID-19 crisis, with circa 67.6 million young men and women unemployed. This situation is expected to worsen. The informality rate is high among youth, with around 77 per cent in informal jobs (328 million young workers) compared to 60 per cent of adults (25 and above). Informal workers are estimated to have lost 60 per cent of their income in the first month of the crisis alone.<sup>5</sup>

In many countries social partners\* have worked together to agree on responses that protect people and workers on the front lines, strengthen social protection and especially health care, and to create or to extend social protection schemes to provide income support. However, in other countries, governments, employers, or both, have taken advantage of the crisis to strip away workers’ rights, shrink social dialogue, and impose new authoritarian laws.

Several governments, including the G20, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have taken some positive steps on debt relief for the poorest countries and deployment of financial support. Some actors have been advocating for debt forgiveness, or a Global Fund for Universal Social Protection that would aid the

poorest of the poor in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>6</sup> Another way forward would be to increase cash transfer programmes.

Responding to the devastation from COVID-19 will require massive recovery plans, reconstruction and resilience. The same is true of the climate crisis, with just ten years to stabilise the planet and see a global reduction of 45 per cent of emissions.<sup>7</sup>

Both crises require new levels of care, social protection, decent jobs, and public investment. Building back better<sup>8</sup> is not only possible, it is necessary<sup>9</sup>. It is a way to leave a living planet for future generations while securing good jobs and livelihoods, eradicating poverty and reducing

inequality. Working under a Just Transition Framework that leaves no one behind should include workers at the table in social dialogue to negotiate the implementation of policies and other relevant decisions that affect the labour market. It can provide the pathway to address decent work deficits while tackling the climate change crisis.

*Union to Union* is one of the Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSO) in the international development cooperation context. Just transition discussions in the international arenas have been ongoing for around ten years, but its potential in development cooperation remains to be fully achieved. *Union to Union* recognises the Just Transition Framework as a tool to advance social justice and is committed to support it.

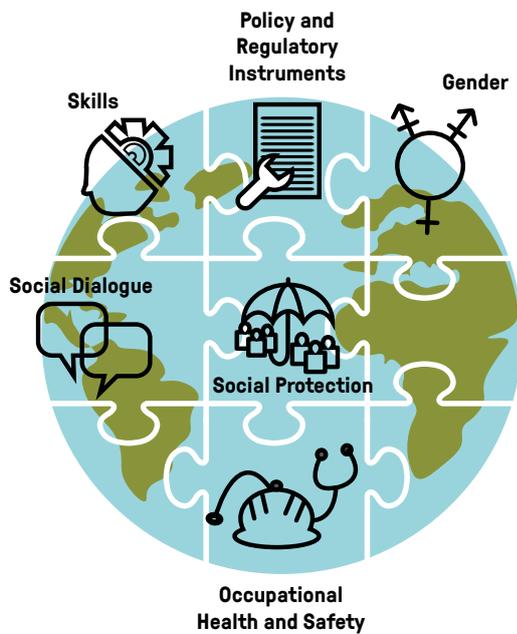


**JUST TRANSITION**



**Speed up the process**

- International Development Cooperation
- Alliance Building
- Policy Coherence



**Decent Work on a living planet**



ILLUSTRATION: ULRIKA LARSSON FORSBERG/PRESS ART



Most workers in the waste management sector in Peru have poor wages and working conditions, something that the trade union SINTRAESLIMP, for example, is working for a change. In a project with the Swedish trade unions Fastighetsanställdas förbundet and Svenska Transportarbetareförbundet (from 2020), UNI Global Union and Union to Union, SINTRAESLIMP offers training on union organising. PHOTO: SOFIA SÖDERIN

# What is Just Transition?

Half a decade after the negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement, the world is not on track to meet the agreed targets.<sup>10</sup> Governments are struggling to gain popular support for ambitious climate action, while the crises of inequality and climate change are getting worse. Now, with widespread unemployment from the COVID-19 crisis, working people face fears for their families and futures.

In a growing number of places, however, trade unions have supported and driven climate action. This is possible through a just transition approach. Just transition as a concept was developed by the labour movement at the end of the 1990s and is today a well-defined and accepted part of international and national frameworks on sustainable development and responses to climate change.<sup>11</sup>

Just transition plans cover both measures for workers who may lose their jobs or livelihoods, and measures to ensure that new green jobs are good jobs. It includes managing the phase-out or transformation of high-emitting sectors and promoting the growth of low-emitting sectors with decent jobs. A solid just transition plan includes measures to diversify economies and ensure that they are more resilient to climate change, along with measures for communities. In short, just transition aims to address environmental, social and economic issues concurrently.<sup>12</sup>

So far, however, well-known examples of just transition have come from experience in countries such as Spain, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands. Nonetheless, some trade unions in low- and middle-income countries have also been working on just transition strategies and adapting them to fit into their national contexts and with their development needs. This report provides examples of how workers in low- and middle-income countries are applying just transition components in order to achieve better working conditions for workers and a sound environment at the same time.

## Global frameworks and norms for Just Transition

In 2015 the United Nations (UN) adopted a set of agreements that together comprise a global framework on just transition. This framework comes primarily from the International Labour Organization (ILO), a tripartite United Nations body that consists of workers and their representatives, employers' organisations, and governments. The ILO negotiates global agreements and standards related to work. In 2015, the ILO concluded discussions on the *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. The guidelines provide governments, workers and employers with the main components for how to design transition to a greener, low-carbon economy while creating decent jobs at scale, minimise impacts on workers, eradicate poverty and promote social protection.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of 2015, the negotiation of the Paris Agreement produced another key piece of the global framework on just transition. The Paris Agreement includes just transition in its preamble, referring to “the imperative of the just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work.”<sup>14</sup>

Since 2015, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), other UN agencies, and international efforts on climate change have produced a range of initiatives on just transition. These focus on the central importance of just transition in delivering climate targets and calls for national action and social dialogue by states. For example, in its capacity as President of COP 24, Poland launched the Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration, which encourages countries to incorporate just transition into their national plans under the Paris Agreement.<sup>15</sup> In 2019, the UN Secretary General launched the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative, in which countries present their national commitments to promote action on decent and green jobs.<sup>16</sup> Finally, the Powering Past Coal Alliance, a coalition of national governments and other actors, has established a Just Transition Task Force and is working on strategies for just transition.<sup>17</sup>

Combined, these initiatives and the ILO Guidelines can be understood as an early stage of a global governance around just transition. One that provides principles, norms and a set of criteria for national and subnational analysis to be taken into consideration when designing and implementing just transition strategies.

When a just transition takes place, job and income gains are maximised, risks of job and income losses counterbalanced and the vulnerable socially protected and included. The economies generate lower emissions and environmental impacts while environmental quality and resilience improves. Just transition could be seen as a framework without a standard set of rules but with components and a shared vision of the role of sustainable development, along with a process based on social dialogue. An agenda negotiated and shared by social partners – workers, industry and governments – taking into consideration geographical, political, cultural, environmental and social contexts.

The existing documentation does not provide detailed guidance to states or social partners about what kind of social dialogue is required, nor set the standard for good national laws, plans, or

regulations on just transition. The ILO Guidelines do, however, provide “practical orientation to governments and social partners with some specific options”. They are designed to support country-specific applications of just transition. (See quote).

The ILO Guidelines recognise that there may be fundamental differences of approach to just transition for developed and developing countries and even refer to the principle of common

but differentiated responsibilities from the Rio Declaration.<sup>19</sup>

Consistent with the ILO Guidelines’ non-prescriptive approach, examples of just transition so far vary widely from country to country.

Social dialogue processes range from formal, constitutional fora such as the National Economic Development and Labour Council in South Africa to time-limited commissions or task forces with broader membership, such as the German Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment. In Nigeria the government has involved trade unions in formal discussions of national climate plans to be submitted under the Paris Agreement. Similarly, national and subnational plans, laws, and regulations on just transition also vary between countries and between levels within countries: city, province and region.

**“Sharing a common global purpose, there are different approaches, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions, which is our overarching goal.”<sup>18</sup>**





Farm workers are vulnerable to climate change and price changes on the global food market. But workers also face poor working environments and conditions. IUF, the Swedish trade union Kommunal and *Union to Union* have worked together with local trade unions in Africa in a project that aims to reduce workplace accidents and mobilise people to tackle working conditions.

PHOTO: LINA KARLSSON

# Just Transition as a way to foster social justice, tackle poverty eradication and safeguard the environment

Shortly after the negotiation of the ILO Guidelines, the UN agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the 2030 Agenda. Achieving the SDGs is closely connected to succeeding in ensuring just transition, particularly through targets on social protection systems for all (SDG 1.3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work for all (SDG 8), and climate change (SDG 13).<sup>20</sup>

Poverty and vulnerability are exacerbated by climate change impacts. They affect workers, their families and their communities. To deal with these impacts, there is a need for a shift in how we live, produce and consume. To reduce global emissions and keep the global temperature increase under 2.0°C, as agreed in the Paris Agreement, a dramatic shift needs to take place. The opportunities and obstacles to employment must not be overlooked – especially in a world of unemployment and decent work deficits, including high youth unemployment.

As efforts to advance environmental sustainability will change the world of work, it is necessary to involve trade unions in the discussion and in the shaping of policies. There is substantial evidence that decent work can be created while better practices to safeguard the environment are promoted. A policy to reduce greenhouse gases may lead to unemployment in a specific sector, as it may create opportunities in another. As it will be demonstrated by some of the sectorial examples in this publication, the transformation of our societies will in particular require reskilling of workers or extension of social protection.

**Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”<sup>21</sup>**

A social dialogue is widely recognised as a pathway to building strong cohesion when designing policies. It requires all labour market partners to be involved, invited and technically capable of joining in the discussions. Democratically established trade unions that represent workers’ interests, with a deeper understanding of how climate policies affect their sector and with the adequate technical expertise, could contribute to a higher level of ambition regarding climate change. For policies to be fair, and to tackle the breadth of climate change implications, they need to be analysed through a systems thinking

lens. That means including the wider context of a situation to avoid unintended outcomes and/or consequences, and – if consequences are unavoidable – not being blind/oblivious to them and designing policies to address them.

To be able to reduce emissions while also

addressing development issues, such as providing citizens with access to energy, adequate transport, sanitation and housing, some countries need financial support. Other countries have agreed to contribute via development cooperation funds. A Just Transition Framework could be used to tackle development challenges that integrate all three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – at the same time.

Decent work, one of the pillars of just transition, is critical for development and alleviating poverty. About half the world’s population still lives on two dollars per day or less, despite the fact that many work full-time.<sup>22</sup> 57 per cent of those living in extreme poverty work, while one-third of working age people in developing countries lives in moderate poverty.



Sara Nyokabi is a bus conductor in Nairobi, Kenya. The city has introduced a more climate friendly public transport system, to which Sara's trade union is positive as long as the new jobs created are decent jobs. Therefore, Sara's trade union collaborates with the Swedish trade union Seko, International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF) and *Union to Union* for a just transition.

PHOTO: ANNA NYLANDER

# Trade union positions on Just Transition

Workers and their unions are essential actors in just transition. At the global level, union federations work to strengthen international frameworks, support unions on the ground, and negotiate agreements on just transition with multinational enterprises and other groups of actors.

Internationally, trade unions are organised geographically and by sector. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is the global federation for most of the world's national trade union federations, representing 200 million workers in 163 countries. Global union federations (GUFs) are federations of unions that represent millions of workers in specific sectors and trades.

## THE GLOBAL UNION FEDERATIONS (GUFs)

- BWI – Building and Wood Workers' International
- EI – Education International
- IndustriAll Global Union
- FIA – International Federation of Actors
- ICN – International Council of Nurses
- IFJ – International Federation of Journalists
- FIM – International Federation of Musicians
- ITF – International Transport Workers' Federation
- IUF – International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
- PSI – Public Services International
- UNI – UNI Global Union

The ITUC and the GUFs have positions, policy proposals, and activities regarding climate change and just transition. The international structures play a role in consolidating trade union positions, advocating for international policy norms, negotiating agreements with multinational enterprises, and supporting trade unions in their efforts for basic labour rights.

Global union positions on just transition are in line

with the components from the ILO Guidelines. They advocate for a fair, ambitious and binding global climate agreement; national climate action; and just transition for workers and communities. Several global union positions include the following:

- Just transition can be a way forward in terms of addressing both the impacts of climate change action and the impacts of technological changes, such as automation and digitalisation.
- Emphasis on the role of the state in leading the plans to cut GHG emissions, establishing sustainable industrial policies, delivering public investments and services, creating decent jobs, and ensuring universal social protection such as pensions, income protection, education and training.
- Emphasis on challenges related to the power balance between social partners and an enabling environment for social dialogue needing to be secured.
- The role of public and community ownership, particularly of services, is highlighted.

## Trade union positions on Just Transition in low- and middle-income countries

National and sectoral unions in low- and middle-income countries have varying experiences and institutional positions on just transition. For example, the Congress of South African Trade Unions was an early advocate of just transition and climate jobs, with positions on the issues dating from 2009. The National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa adopted resolutions on climate, just transition, and public ownership of energy in 2012. Some unions have pointed out just transition as a useful concept that can be adapted to their country contexts, including Unified Workers' Central in Brazil (CUT Brasil - Central Única dos Trabalhadores), Confederation of All Indonesian Trade Unions (KSBI - Konfederasi Serikat Buruh Seluruh) and the Nigerian Labour Congress.

Others, although well aware of climate change, are yet to prioritise it in comparison with what are traditionally seen as core issues for trade unions. Some unions do not see opportunities to engage in just transition via social dialogue due to lack of an

enabling environment. Therefore, they reject just transition as they perceive it to be an incremental approach that would lead to minor improvements in working conditions. They advocate for a system change.

Global Union Federations (GUF) regional offices and the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) regional centres in Africa, Asia Pacific and

Latin America have worked with their affiliates to develop appropriate approaches to just transition. They have developed a range of positions that identify climate change as a trade union issue. Some barriers to the ability to implement Just Transition Framework, as well as priority issues for trade unions in low- and middle-income countries, have been identified.<sup>23</sup>

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## BARRIERS TO A JUST TRANSITION

- Lack of or limited social dialogue.
- The systematic violations of fundamental human and labour rights and lack of an enabling environment for social dialogue.
- High unemployment and informality: two billion working people find themselves in informal jobs, with the majority in low- and middle-income countries.
- Lack of social protection: including income support and essential public services such as education and health care.

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## PRIORITY ISSUES

- Consideration of poverty and the need for development and energy access in climate change planning.
- Recognition of the skills, knowledge and expertise of workers regarding how to ensure a just transition, and workers' inclusion in the discussions.
- Adequate social protection, including active labour market policies and programmes. Safety nets are critical in moments in which societies and a given productive sector are in transformation.
- Highlight the impact of privatisation of public services and state-owned enterprises. State owned enterprises are perceived as offering better working conditions and job security than the private sector in several countries. The privatisation trend has been intensified in services such as transport and waste management and has led to displacement of informal workers while creating relatively few new jobs.
- Need to recognise the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). Workers in low- and middle-income countries are already suffering climate-related impacts such as a rise in sea level, flooding, heatwaves, droughts, and other extreme weather events.





Textile factory worker Fatima Akhter Faria holding the clothes she makes for overseas buyers. Photo taken in Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS PICTURES

# Just Transition initiatives – examples of cooperation in low- and middle-income countries

Just transition is still a new concept in the field of international development cooperation. This is largely because international norms for just transition are relatively new, as are social dialogue processes focused on it. So, while there is growing awareness of the concept and an expanding field of academic and theoretical work relating to it, just transition in practice and development finance for it are limited so far.

A survey conducted by the Just Transition Centre to a limited number of development and trade union actors, although without the aim of presenting a complete picture, demonstrates the range of just transition and the growing support for it among state and non-state actors in low- and middle-income countries. In this publication they are presented in three categories: Governments and intergovernmental entities such as International Financing Institutions (IFIs); Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSOs); and other development cooperation actors such as NGOs and political party foundations and institutions.

## **Intergovernmental entities**

In the UN system, the ILO is responsible for negotiating and driving international standards for just transition. It works to harmonise approaches to just transition by other UN entities, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It also provides considerable training, technical and analytical assistance to states on the issue via its Green Jobs Initiative, including supporting pilot projects. Currently, the ILO has pilot projects in Ghana, Uruguay and the Philippines. These projects aim to produce results on the ground in the form of decent, greener jobs, as well as test interventions and demonstrate models and best practice.<sup>24</sup>

## **World Bank**

The World Bank is the only IFI so far with concrete plans to provide technical assistance and finance

for work on just transition in low- and middle-income countries. With funding from the Canadian government, the World Bank will support coal phase-out and renewable energy in Asia.<sup>25</sup> Another financing stream from the United Kingdom will be used globally on energy transitions. The latter will include just transition in the case via a guide to just transitions in coal mine closure that the World Bank published in 2019.<sup>26</sup>

## **Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA)**

PPCA is an alliance of national and subnational governments, as well as other actors that have committed to phasing out coal-fired power by 2030 or shortly thereafter. Government members bring diplomatic and financial resources to the group's efforts to persuade other countries to phase out coal-fired power, including efforts in Global South countries. PPCA has a Just Transition Task Force, including representatives from the labour movement, and is exploring concrete work in this area.<sup>27</sup>

## **Trade union activities and organisations**

The ITUC and several GUFs provide direct support to their affiliates in work on just transition, including on social dialogue processes. Their support ranges from convening workshops to training in the development of toolkits and more. The ITUC established the Just Transition Centre with the purpose of supporting its affiliates from developed and developing countries in advancing their positions on the issue.<sup>28</sup>

## **Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSOs)**

Some of the Trade Union Solidarity and Support Organisations (TUSOs) have supported trade unions development projects on issues around climate change, biodiversity and just transition in low- and middle-income countries. These include APHEDA-Union Aid Abroad (Australia), Mondiaal FNV (the Netherlands), Solidarity Center (United States of America), and *Union to Union* (Sweden).

*Union to Union* is currently working with just transition:

- *Research and policy*: conduction and commission of research on just transition and providing inputs to reports and strategies.
- *Development cooperation projects*: supporting international development cooperation projects
- *Information projects*: information and knowledge sharing by organising seminars, trainings and other events
- *Strengthening trade unions' capacity*: providing and supporting training on climate change, biodiversity and decent work.

Most but not all projects supported are in higher-emitting sectors such as transport, agriculture palm oil, mining, and oil and gas. During the study carried out by the Just Transition Centre, several of the TUSOs contacted have spoken about their interest in expanding support for and engagement in just transition projects in the near future. The growing attention from TUSOs in the field of just transition should be matched with strong coordination among these like-minded donors.<sup>29</sup> In this way, they are able to work on identifying synergies and gaps in the support, and even explore joint endeavours.

Six lessons learned from TUSOs that should be considered when supporting just transition engagement among trade unions are:

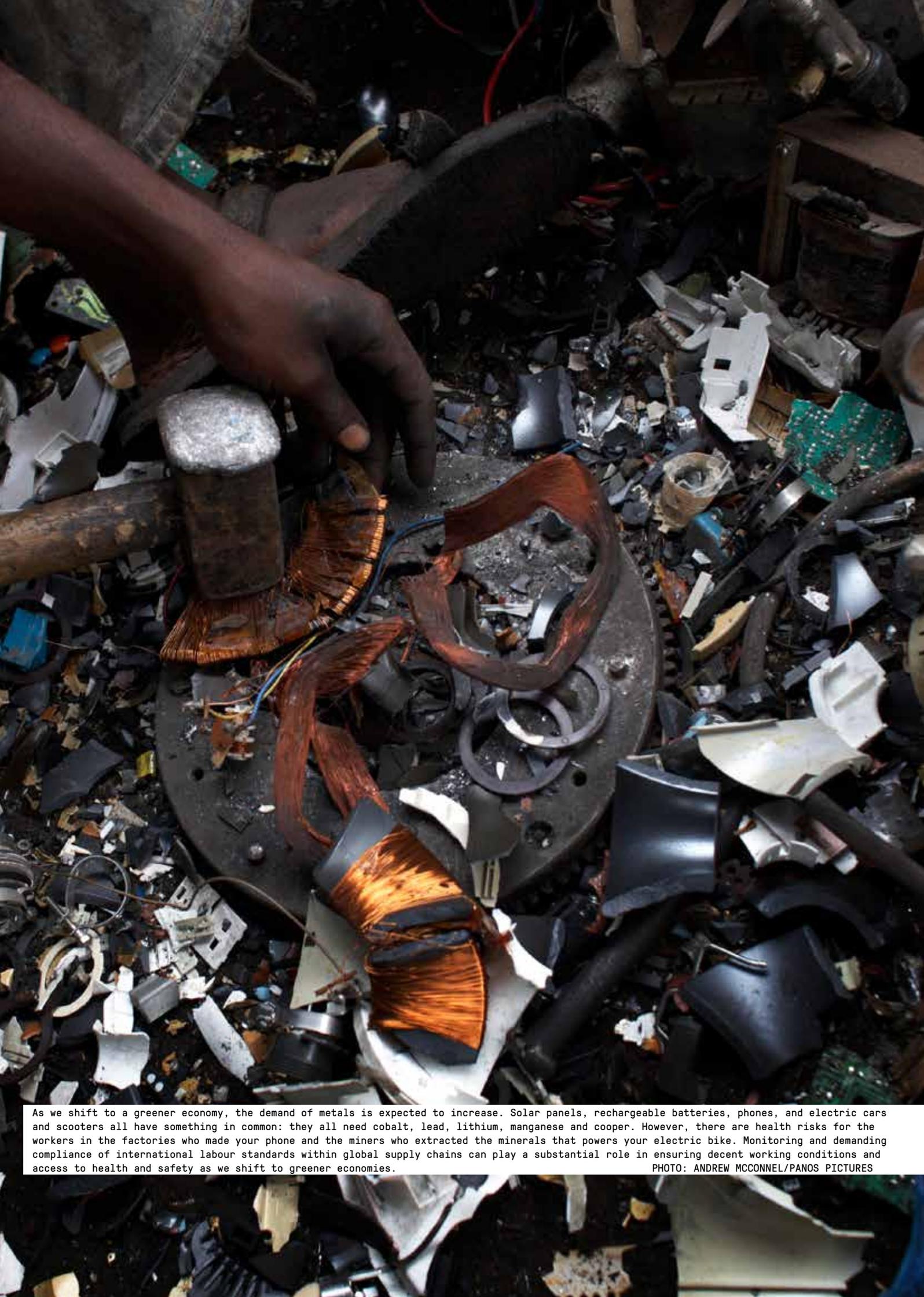
- Engage organisations at local level and promote leadership involvement.
- Promote the opportunities that exist in greening our societies, such as core social protection benefits and the need to address underlying inequalities.

- Promote local ownership in the intervention logic: do not dictate the agenda nor offer prescriptive views on how trade unions should engage on just transition.
- Listen, chart possibilities and draft strategies together; partners need to take the lead in determining the interventions that are achievable and realistic in their own context.
- Support capacity for how to include just transition in further advocacy agendas and social dialogue mechanisms.
- Stimulate peer-to-peer learning through exchange meetings and programmes.
- Promote cooperation among like-minded organisations.

#### **Civil society, including NGOs and political foundations**

International environment and development NGOs have begun to engage on just transition in the low- and middle-income countries. For example, ActionAid has developed principles for just transition in agriculture, Friends of the Earth works with trade unions on the ground in some African and Latin American countries, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) works on just transition in South Africa, among other locations.

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a German political foundation, has played a strong role in supporting trade unions and trade union partners in activities related to just transition. They have produced technical reports on the concept of just transition and provided financial and other support to unions so that they can engage on the issue.<sup>30</sup> In Sweden, the Olof Palme International Center\*\* is engaged in trade unions issues including support related to climate change.



As we shift to a greener economy, the demand of metals is expected to increase. Solar panels, rechargeable batteries, phones, and electric cars and scooters all have something in common: they all need cobalt, lead, lithium, manganese and copper. However, there are health risks for the workers in the factories who made your phone and the miners who extracted the minerals that powers your electric bike. Monitoring and demanding compliance of international labour standards within global supply chains can play a substantial role in ensuring decent working conditions and access to health and safety as we shift to greener economies.

PHOTO: ANDREW MCCONNELL/PANOS PICTURES



Increasing renewable energy generation and energy efficiency is essential to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. PHOTO: LAURENT WEYL/ARGOS/PANOS

# Case studies in low- and middle-income countries

In the Paris Agreement, countries have committed to implementing plans that will keep the global temperature increase well below two degrees Celsius. They also committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, which requires ambitious climate action. Financial support was also agreed upon in order to support climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Trade unions have been working on climate, decent work, and poverty eradication in several sectors.

The selection of case studies<sup>31</sup> in this report aims to provide regional and sector representation while illustrating the challenges and providing examples of trade union responses to climate change. However, they are not a complete list of trade union engagement. It includes involvement from nurses to journalists, from transport to public utility workers. The case studies also contain a brief COVID-19 impact analysis. The health crisis has exacerbated underlying vulnerabilities in these sectors that can be used as lessons learned when operating under a Just Transition Framework.

The stories raised in the cases show how unions on the ground can contribute to climate action and poverty eradication. In a couple of countries, unions are engaged in social dialogue with the government and sometimes employers. Social dialogue is crucial in advancing just transition. However, in many countries, social dialogue is yet to take place. There, trade unions and their partners are preparing by building capacity in their membership, forming alliances and developing joint strategies for just transition.

In many countries, being involved in a trade union is a dangerous endeavour. ITUC's Global Rights Index analyses the world's worst countries for workers by rating countries on a scale from 1 to 5+ on the degree of respect for workers' rights. Five of the six case studies concern countries that have been ranked by the ITUC Global Rights Index 2020<sup>32</sup> as category five ("no guarantee of rights") and also among the top ten worst countries for working

people. The agriculture case study focuses on Nigeria, a country that ranks as a four in the Index ("systematic violations of rights" category).

## Just Transition for the energy and mining sectors in South Africa

The global energy sector is responsible for over two-thirds of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, with coal-fired power producing 54 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the sector. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from coal-fired power are the "single largest source of global temperature increase."<sup>33</sup> Phasing out coal-fired power, phasing in clean energy, and ensuring a just transition for coal workers and communities is essential to meaningful action on climate change. Most of South Africa's emissions come from coal-fired power.

### South Africa – climate commitments

South Africa needs to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and has committed to doing so. Its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) contains a target to limit greenhouse gases to between 398 and 614 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq<sup>34</sup> over the period 2025–2030. This target is equivalent to a 19–82 per cent increase based on 1990 levels. South Africa has included just transition in its NDC.<sup>35</sup>

### The energy and mining sectors

South Africa's coal-fired power fuels 90 per cent of the country's electricity via the state utility Eskom. The remainder of the electricity supply comes from nuclear, hydropower, and conventional renewables.<sup>36</sup>

Eskom, and the mines tied to it, is an important source of employment. In a country with high unemployment, Eskom employs circa 131,000 workers directly and many others on a contract basis. Eskom plays a key developmental role in supplying low-cost electricity to poor and working-class South Africans, particularly black South

Africans who were deprived of access to modern electricity by the apartheid state. Eskom's low-priced power is also crucial to the competitiveness of South Africa's export sectors, particularly minerals, mining, and manufacturing.<sup>37</sup>

### **South African trade unions and social dialogue**

South African unions and national tripartite structures are strong and formalised. Although trade union density is historically low at 28 per cent, it is still higher than in many other countries. Its tripartite body, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), has a constitutional mandate. Unions have been engaged and have contributed in consultation processes.<sup>38</sup>

### **The impact of COVID-19**

In response to COVID-19, South Africa moved swiftly to lockdown, strengthened public health, and enacted a massive relief and recovery package equivalent to 10 per cent of the country's GDP. Nonetheless, the impact on jobs is huge. Before the COVID-19 crisis, South Africa's official unemployment rate was 29.1 per cent. Prognoses on unemployment post-COVID-19 range from 40 per cent to 50 per cent. South Africa's economy may decline by as much as 16 per cent in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 and the economic effects of lockdown.<sup>39</sup>

Electricity demand in South Africa dropped by 9000 MW during March 2020. Eskom has since notified both coal and wind producers that it may not honour contracts for supply due to the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>40</sup> It remains to be seen whether and how quickly electricity demand rebounds and what the COVID-19 crisis will mean for the workers at Eskom and in coal mines.<sup>41</sup>

### **The South African government's approach**

To reduce emissions from the power sector, the South African government has relied so far on tenders to the private sector to develop the renewable energy supply. Regulations limit the ability of municipalities, communities and companies to build renewable energy projects for their own use.<sup>42</sup>

Prior to COVID-19, Eskom faced financial and operational difficulties. The government intended to split Eskom up through what is known as

unbundling. Generally, the unbundling of utilities is the first step in the privatisation process and results in job losses. The South African government has, however, said that no jobs will be lost and that Eskom will remain a state-owned entity.<sup>43</sup>

The World Bank has concluded that unbundling and privatisation do not promote a transition away from coal and are not required to achieve it.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, trade union experiences from Australia and Canada show that decarbonisation in the power sector is more difficult to achieve when the sector is privatised. Experiences from power sector liberalisation in Eastern Europe indicate that the process does not necessarily reduce prices for consumers.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, governments and IFIs offering international finance to refinance Eskom's debt and fund local just transition plans have two conditions: an accelerated plan for coal plant closure, and the unbundling and privatisation of Eskom.

The South African government has promised coal and power station workers a just transition but understand that it is going to be challenging, particularly in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Eskom is already closing its older coal-fired power stations with no social or economic plans in place as required by law. If unbundling and privatisation go forward, the scenario will be challenging due to job losses.<sup>46</sup>

To date there have been multiple processes to stake out a future course for Eskom, South Africa's coal sector, and the tens of thousands of workers in the sector. These range from social dialogue in NEDLAC to a Presidential Task Team, a process under the National Planning Commission with strong community engagement, and an agreement from the government to form a Presidential Climate Change Commission to produce a just transition plan.<sup>47</sup>

### **Trade union responses**

South African trade unions support action on climate change and efforts to cut emissions through just transition. They were pioneers on these issues. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is South Africa's largest federation of trade unions and was founded in 1985. It has 1,800,000 members and is a member of South Africa's governing Tripartite Alliance. Its affiliates include the National

Union of Mineworkers (NUM). It has had a long-standing commitment to addressing climate change through just transition, including a 2009 Congress resolution that “climate change is one of the greatest threats to our planet and our people”.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, in 2012 the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) adopted a position on climate action through just transition.<sup>49</sup>

However, South Africa’s rapidly deteriorating economic situation means that the unions oppose any action that would cut existing jobs. South African workers now face a deep recession with accelerating job losses, increasing costs for energy, food, imported goods, and a hunger crisis during lockdown.<sup>50</sup>

South African trade unions reject privatisation of electricity generation, both because of the likelihood of job losses and because it is inconsistent with Eskom’s developmental role in South Africa. They have also opposed privatised renewable energy tenders.<sup>51</sup>

The ILO, IndustriAll, ITUC Africa, and the Just Transition Centre have worked with and learned from South African trade unions on just transition issues, particularly those associated with the phase-out of coal. Activities have ranged from convening meetings, joint workshops, sharing experiences and technical information, to acting as a labour resource in discussions and processes.

In early 2020 COSATU launched its own proposal for a social compact, with a rescue plan for Eskom, just transition, and expanded generation of renewable energy by Eskom and municipalities as essential elements. The social partners discussed the plan in NEDLAC, where it received strong support. COSATU has pointed out that international financing should focus on job creation in renewable energy manufacturing and other areas, as opposed to privatising Eskom.<sup>52</sup>

Due to COVID-19, discussions about the social compact have been put on hold. When they are resumed, two things will be crucial: measures for Eskom, or the power sector, should maintain and create decent work, and employment creation should be a priority.

### ■ ■ Lessons learned and best practice

South Africa has a good starting point for just transition in the power sector. It has strong unions with long-standing support for just transition, government commitments to reducing emissions and just transition, established social dialogue forums, a single state-owned power sector utility, and a mobilised civil society.

Yet transforming the coal sector has been proven difficult. Certainly, power relations and the long-term effects of corruption under the previous government are key factors. But the biggest practical barrier has been the lack of new jobs. This is perhaps the most important lesson learned. One consequence of the high unemployment scenario is that workers need to see real plans for new, good jobs as a “benefit” of the sector transformation. Without that, changes will likely be opposed, including decarbonisation, because workers recognise that losing their jobs means going straight into unemployment, with few social safety nets and therefore poverty.

In line with this, workers and unions have been opposing efforts to privatise and unbundle the power sector unless they know this will not threaten jobs. Evidence from other countries shows this opposition is well-founded. Privatisation and unbundling almost always result in job losses.

The government’s initial policy on decarbonisation involved privatising power generation through tenders to renewable energy developers. It produced a paradoxical result. Unions with longstanding support for just transition, action on climate change, and renewable energy have opposed decarbonisation in part because it was coupled with privatisation and job losses. Thus, a second lesson learned is that power sector privatisation could make the decarbonisation path more difficult, as it introduces additional threats of job losses.

In this context COSATU’s social compact proposal from January 2020 illustrates best practice by a social partner. The proposal was a step towards improving the possibilities to power sector decarbonisation. With contributions from all partners, it brought together three core elements: a financial plan for Eskom involving workers’ capital; expanding renewable energy generation by public

entities – Eskom, municipalities and communities; and maintaining jobs. International finance would also have a role in this proposal by funding renewable energy manufacturing in South Africa.

## Just Transition for the energy sector in the Philippines

Increasing renewable energy generation and energy efficiency is essential to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. These two measures alone could provide 90 per cent of the emissions reductions needed by 2050.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Philippines - commitments to climate action**

The commitment of the government of the Philippines under the Paris Agreement is to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 70 per cent by 2030, if climate finance and technology are made available.<sup>54</sup> This reduction would come from the energy, transport, waste, forestry and industrial sectors. Part of this commitment also includes increasing renewable energy capacity, which is in line with the country's Renewable Energy Act (2008) and the National Renewable Energy Plan.<sup>55</sup>

### **The energy sector – coal and renewables**

In 2015, coal-fired power provided 44 per cent of electricity production in the Philippines, though that share is almost certainly higher today. The government's focus so far has been on increasing private sector investment in renewable energy with tax incentives and tenders, as opposed to driving renewable energy investment through the country's 120 electricity cooperatives. Prior to COVID-19, the overall economy was growing and growth in the energy sector was expected to follow.

### **Filipino trade unions**

Trade unions and workers in the Philippines face a very dangerous and precarious situation. In 2020, the Philippines was placed among the top ten most dangerous countries in the world for trade unionists. From death threats, murders, and targeting of trade union leaders, there are no guarantees for labour rights. The decline in trade union density reflects this anti-union scenario: from

20.2 per cent in 2003 to 6.5 per cent in 2016. In 2015, 30.7 per cent of workers found themselves in precarious forms of employment.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Philippines' trade union report on SDG implementation, a low and declining rate of unionisation has negative implications for decent work. Low unionisation has resulted in low collective bargaining coverage which, in its turn, may drive average wages down. The absence of trade unions in some companies deprives workers of the first line of defence against abuse.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, the government of the Philippines has committed to just transition, passed a Green Jobs Act in 2016, and was engaged in a project with the ILO to explore implementation of the Act. The Ministry of Labour led this project and engaged unions in social dialogue.<sup>58</sup>

### **The impact of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has suspended the Philippines' economy, as well as its plans for the energy sector. GDP growth shrank in the first quarter of 2020 for the first time in 21 years. The Philippines is now entering a technical recession.<sup>59</sup> As a result, the Philippines might slow down the pace of renewable investment. To meet this challenge, the government has rolled out a stimulus package equivalent to 8 per cent of the country's GDP.<sup>60</sup>

### **Trade union responses**

Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) is a national trade union federation, and an ITUC affiliate, with more than 80,000 members across the public, private and informal sectors. SENTRO has well developed positions on climate change and just transition. It is one of the signatories to a successful petition to the Philippines Commission on Human Rights on whether big polluters – 47 high-emitting companies – could be held liable for human rights violations due to climate change. SENTRO has built a coalition with civil society organisations for promotion of policy coherence on renewable energy and green jobs, called "Center". The federation is an active participant in the ITUC's delegations to the UNFCCC processes and in Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), a global initiative that works to promote democratic control of energy and solutions on climate change and energy poverty.<sup>61</sup>



Vicente Unay Jr, trade union activist in the Philippines.

**“It’s very simple. Just transition is a measure. A protective measure. It protects decent jobs while decarbonising the economy.”**

Vicente Posada Unay Jr lives and works in the Philippines, a country that is impacted by climate change and also by natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and hurricanes. He has been a trade unionist and a climate justice activist for decades, convinced that “all workers must be united to address climate change”.

Vicente Posada Unay Jr is the Secretary General

of the National Union of Workers in the Power Industry, a national trade union federation that organises workers across the public and private sectors in the Philippines.

The trade union advocates for climate justice and has taken the initiative for a social movement and coalition on climate justice with other non-governmental organisations and actors in the Philippines.

While SENTRO is engaged in climate issues and sees them as inseparable from matters of public ownership of the energy sector, the energy sector in the Philippines has been privatised since 2001. SENTRO has been working to restore public ownership of the energy sector, primarily through work to expand electricity cooperatives. Electricity cooperatives are owned by consumers/cooperative members, as opposed to being owned by corporations. Currently, electricity cooperatives cover 50% of the electricity distribution.<sup>62</sup>

SENTRO works to promote just transition in three ways. First, it works with 23 cooperatives with 30 million household members to promote renewable energy. In a pilot project on Masabate Island that is served by an electricity cooperative, SENTRO brought in technical expertise to help the cooperative develop renewable energy generation for the island's one million residents. Second, SENTRO has engaged in social dialogue with the government to achieve policies to drive the renewable energy transition in cooperatives, as opposed to solely through the private sector. Third, SENTRO works with its affiliates to ensure that there are provisions related to just transition in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). For example, the CBA with Siemens Electric Power includes capacity building for consumers and unions on just transition and climate change, and a commitment to build an industry roadmap for decarbonisation. Similarly, CBAs for coal sector workers include expanded severance and retirement benefits so that coal workers have better protection if their jobs are axed.<sup>63</sup>

#### ■ ■ Lessons learned – best practice and challenges

SENTRO's approach to just transition and energy democracy illustrates best practice for trade unions. The federation makes use of traditional and non-traditional tools such as social dialogue with government on policy, collective bargaining with employers, alliances with civil society, litigation, international activity and community organising.

SENTRO has a strategic approach to building power, including building a base with communities. It works within the existing structure of public ownership, electricity cooperatives, to achieve a just energy transition and organize with communities that own cooperatives. External actors that want to support just transition and trade unionism in the Philippines

should look to support this transition in cooperatives. Regrettably, if the political context for SENTRO and other trade unions was bad before COVID-19, now it has worsened. Filipino trade unionists and their families face threats to their lives and denial of basic rights. It is absolutely essential that external actors, from governments, development actors and civil society organizations, support Filipino unions in their struggle for safety and rights, in addition to support for just transition.

This case study provides an insight into how trade unions, with adequate expertise and support can play a role in the advancement towards a lower carbon society. SENTRO's cooperation with development actors, including TUSOs or direct bilateral support from trade unions, has proven fruitful. There is a continuous need to bring the situation in the Philippines to the attention of international actors. Trade unions are a precondition for decent work, which in turn is an essential part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and poverty eradication.

## Just Transition for the textile sector in Bangladesh

The garment sector is responsible for around five per cent of total global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and it should to be included in the plans to reduce emissions in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. Less than one per cent of material used to produce clothing is recycled within the clothing industry, and 13 per cent is recycled for use in other areas.

Prior to COVID-19 there was growing consumer and civil society pressure in some countries for a shift away from fast fashion towards more circular business models.<sup>64</sup> Studies on or activities analysing the impact of this potential shift on workers throughout the supply chain and how to achieve a just transition, remain to be undertaken. It seems likely, however, that any move away from the current model of fast fashion will have major impacts on jobs and on the families that depend on income from the sector.<sup>65</sup>

### **Bangladesh – climate commitments**

In its National Determined Contribution (NDC), Bangladesh commits to reducing its emissions by 5 per cent below the business-as-usual (BAU) level by 2030, using only domestic resources. The country agreed to cut up to 15 per cent of its emissions, conditional on the availability of additional funding. Key emitting sectors are the energy, transport and industrial sectors. Under a BAU scenario, GHG emissions in Bangladesh from these sectors are projected to represent 69 per cent of total emissions by 2030 (excluding LULUCF<sup>66</sup>), an increase of 264 per cent by 2030.<sup>67</sup>

Its industrial sector plan includes textile and leather, as they contribute to the 24 per cent of GHG emissions from manufacturing sub sectors. Examples of mitigation include co-generation, waste heat recovery, efficiency measures, etc., while barriers to mitigation may be a lack of expertise in implementing energy-saving measures and competing priorities for investments. That said, it still remains of greater interest to expand production than to improve energy efficiency.

### **The garment sector and the human costs of consumption**

The ready-made garment sector is an important provider of formal employment in the country, in particular low-skilled, entry level jobs for young women and men, with or without education. Bangladesh, together with China, the European Union and Vietnam, is among the top garment-apparel-producing countries. Together they account for 73.3 per cent of the global market share). Clothing remains a dynamic product among all manufactured goods, with an increase of 3.3 per cent in relation to 2018<sup>68</sup>. When it comes to importers, the EU, United States and Japan remain the world's top buyers.

Before COVID-19, the sector directly employed 4.2 million people in Bangladesh, of whom approximately 60 per cent are women. It indirectly supported as many as 40 million Bangladeshis, or about 25 per cent of the population. Some 83 per cent of the revenue that Bangladesh generated through exports was linked to the garment industry.<sup>69</sup>

### **Bangladeshi workers and trade unions**

In 2020, Bangladesh was ranked by the ITUC among the top ten worst countries for workers. Unions face significant obstacles to union registration and exercise of other core labour rights. Estimates on trade union density in the garment sector range from 5–10 per cent. Several trade unions in factories and industries in this sector are affiliates of IndustriAll, while several retail sector trade unions are affiliates of UNI Global Union.<sup>70</sup>

The Rana Plaza industrial disaster of 2013 killed at least 1,132 people and injured more than 2,500 when a garment factory in Dhaka collapsed. In the aftermath of the disaster, Bangladeshi unions, GUFs IndustriAll and UNI Global Union, and civil society organisations were able to negotiate a legally binding agreement on worker safety with different companies, to be overseen by the ILO. Nonetheless, wages in the sector remain low and social protection inadequate.

### **The impacts of COVID-19**

The Bangladeshi textile sector has suffered immensely from the impact of COVID-19 related lockdowns. Worldwide retail garment stores closed as part of national lockdowns. Fashion companies cancelled orders and the production of garments stopped.<sup>71</sup> This has led to large-scale dismissals of workers, often without legally mandated severance or furlough pay. Many suppliers in Bangladesh have suspended work without paying workers, even for work already completed. Workers in these supply chains are among the most vulnerable and most affected by the crisis, being without savings or access to any form of social protection.<sup>72</sup>

Some brands and retailers have committed to pay in full for all apparel orders already in production or completed, greatly reducing harm to suppliers and workers. Others have not made this commitment and are either cancelling all orders or imposing cancellations or rebates on a supplier-by-supplier basis.<sup>73</sup> The Bangladeshi government has announced a \$588 million stimulus package for the sector to pay wages. The sum, if divided by the number of workers, cover wages for one month only.

Many garment factories have reopened despite the pandemic not being under control. It is now estimated that about 200,000 garment workers

are back at work<sup>74</sup> and most factories do not have adequate safety measures.

Workers' conditions in the garment sectors were already deplorable. The COVID-19 crisis reinforces the extreme challenges faced when establishing fundamental rights and safeguarding working conditions. Urgent efforts are needed to ensure that this vulnerable group of workers and employees has appropriate access to decent housing, with space for quarantine and social distancing while sleeping and eating, potable water and proper sanitation facilities on and off the job, free health care, safe transport, safe work practices and income protection.

### **Trade union responses**

Before the COVID-19 crisis, Bangladeshi unions were focused on ensuring higher wages for garment workers and social protection. The potential for major changes to the sector based on emissions reduction was an emerging but not immediate issue. Bangladeshi unions, IndustriAll, UNI, ITUC Asia Pacific and the Just Transition Centre were considering to start a study of just transition in the sector.

COVID-19 brought disastrous change overnight. As jobs vanished due to cancelled orders and contracts, trade unions have called on the government to ensure urgent action to develop a just national economic and social recovery plan. This must ensure better industrial relations at national and sector level through a functioning National Tripartite Consultation platform and a possible national agreement between government, employers, and trade unions during the pandemic period. From the trade union perspective, a response to the COVID-19 pandemic should include access to healthcare, safety and hygiene, minimum living wage, social protection, and basic human rights.<sup>75</sup>

### **■ ■ Lessons learned – best practices and challenges**

A few months ago, major changes in the garment sector and its supply chain seemed possible. Now, change in the form of brutal job losses has come in a matter of weeks. It is not clear if and when

the garment industry will return to former levels of production and sales. Workers in Bangladesh have been struggling with COVID-19 impacts and consequences.

Two key lessons learned are that social protection is critical when managing all transitions, whether related to climate change or not; and companies must ensure that workers in supply chains are paid a living wage and have access to social protection. Once the pandemic has been brought under control, it will be important to connect the realities of Bangladeshi workers to the need for a just transition that ensures that jobs and sectors are resilient to climate change, along with a shift towards low emission production. Key components of a just transition such as social protection, economic diversification, and decent jobs will be more important than ever.

Working within a Just Transition Framework could be a means of achieving a sustainable garment industry. Just transition could help ensure the involvement of workers and their representatives in social dialogue in order to define the need for investment, skills and reskilling, decent wages, and a social protection programme. The work of Bangladeshi unions with IndustriAll and UNI on the Rana Plaza Agreement could serve as a model. That process brought brands, suppliers, governments and labour to the table and resulted in a legally binding agreement that improved working conditions, including health and safety.

Ensuring effective social dialogue at the national level may be challenging, but it is essential. Components to ensure a just transition in this sector in Bangladesh need to address economic diversification through industrial strategy, collective bargaining agreements for garment workers with strong redundancy packages including pension provisions, and government or employer-paid retraining and reskilling for garment workers. The second generation NDC to be submitted may provide an opportunity to include just transition being further supported through initiatives such as the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative.



Hauwa Mustapha, climate change coordinator for the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC).

**“When we are moving towards a green economy, we need to make sure that the interests of the workers, the community, the people and the vulnerable are taken into consideration. Greening our economies should not perpetuate injustices.”**

Hauwa Mustapha is passionate about social justice and for her, climate change is an issue of injustice. As Nigeria moves towards a greener economy, working under a Just Transition Framework is a way to also move towards social justice.

Hauwa Mustapha explains that just transition is a development issue, as the interests of the workers, the community, the poor and the vulnerable are taken into consideration.

## Just Transition for the agriculture sector in Nigeria

Agriculture is responsible for 19–29 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>76</sup> The sector is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, from extreme weather events and drought to high temperatures. This is particularly true for rainfed agriculture, which in sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 96 per cent of cultivated land.<sup>77</sup>

### Nigeria – climate commitments

Nigeria's commitments under the Paris Agreement include reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent without external climate finance and with external climate finance to 45 per cent by 2030, compared to its BAU scenario. The key priority sectors are energy, oil and gas, agriculture and land use, energy, and transport. To reduce emissions, Nigeria will end gas flaring by 2030 and implement climate-smart agriculture, as well as reforestation.<sup>78</sup>

### Agricultural sector

28.1 per cent of the world's population works in agriculture. In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture accounts for more than 50 per cent of total employment. Roughly 90 per cent of these jobs are informal.<sup>79</sup>

Agriculture is one of the sectors most sensitive to climate change. Under a Business-As-Usual scenario, agricultural productivity in Nigeria could decline by between 10 and 25 per cent by 2080. In some parts of the north, the decline in yield in rainfed agriculture could be as much as 50 per cent. This in turn would impact GDP, reducing it by as much as 4.5 per cent by 2050, even though the share of GDP that agriculture represents will decline from 40 to just 15 per cent.<sup>80</sup>

Roughly 70 per cent of Nigerians work in farming or fishing to some extent. In 2018, agriculture contributed around 21.2 per cent to Nigeria's GDP. In 2019 agriculture made up 36 per cent of total employment, down from approximately 50 per cent in 2015. Almost all these jobs are informal. Roughly equal shares of men and women work in agriculture. Only 1 in 20 Nigerians working in

agriculture is a wage labourer. The remainder are smallholder farmers.<sup>81</sup>

### Nigerian trade unions

Overall, the situation for trade unionists in Nigeria is improving, although there are still systematic violations of workers' rights, particularly regarding the right to go on strike.<sup>82</sup> According to the ITUC Global Rights Index 2020, there are reports of workers that have been dismissed for joining trade unions.

The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has four million members, making it one of the largest trade unions on the African continent. The NLC's affiliates include the Agriculture and Allied Employees Union in Nigeria (AAEUN), which is also affiliated to the global union federations IUF and PSI.<sup>83</sup>

### Impacts of COVID-19

Nigeria's lockdown has had huge impacts on Nigeria's informal workers, most of whom rely on daily wages to get by.<sup>84</sup> As a result of the combined effects of COVID-19 and the global oil price crash, Nigeria's economy is expected to shrink by 3.5 per cent in 2020. The recession is likely to last through 2021, despite a national stimulus package that includes microcredit and international finance. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Nigeria's oil and gas exports will fall by USD 26.5 billion. Oil and gas accounts for 84 per cent of Nigeria's export income.<sup>85</sup>

### Trade union responses

The IUF, a global union federation whose affiliates organise workers in the agriculture and hospitality sector, has conducted an initial workshop focusing on climate, meat and dairy. It resulted in a statement recognising the role of agricultural emissions in climate change, particularly meat and dairy. Participants "agreed that negotiating for new jobs and changing methods of production is needed to secure the rights and interests of dairy workers in the future" along with "collective bargaining demands for a fair transition to climate friendly jobs".<sup>86</sup>

On a national level, the NLC has developed a policy on climate change with civil society actors and in 2018, NLC agreed with Friends of the Earth Nigeria

to launch a joint project on just transition in two sectors – agriculture and petroleum. The project, supported by Mondiaal FNV, Friends of the Earth Netherlands and the Just Transition Centre, has two goals: build a shared understanding and political agenda between Nigerian trade unions, civil society, and communities regarding what a just transition would look like for these two key sectors in Nigeria, and develop models and best practices for other unions.<sup>87</sup>

The project consists of a multisite, bottom-up study of worker and community views on climate change and just transition. For the agricultural sector, the study looked at the potential for a just transition to agroecology and more sustainable methods of land use and production, as well as better and more skilled jobs.<sup>88</sup>

Interviews with agricultural workers, farm owners, and government representatives showed that workers have made detailed observations of climate change impacts, even though they do not necessarily link climate change with emissions. They understood the idea of just transition when it was explained using familiar concepts and examples but were unfamiliar with the term. They were more familiar with agroecology because of its similarities to traditional farming techniques. Finally, workers understood the need for a transition to more sustainable agriculture. However, many were frustrated because they saw few real options for and many practical barriers to this change.<sup>89</sup>

The project currently includes elements for monitoring working conditions. A potential phase two for this project would entail developing policy measures to promote agroecology at national or regional level and adding additional pilot sites. It could involve steps such as: 1) onsite training for workers, 2) materials and training development, 3) technical support to implement agroecology practices.

It could be beneficial to include monitoring indicators based on the pillars of decent work, targeting improvements in the working conditions of agricultural workers, including formalisation of their current jobs.

### ■ ■ Lessons learned – best practice and challenges

Work on just transition and agriculture is at a very early stage. Thus, lessons learned from this case study concern how to develop union positions, approaches, and processes in a context where relatively few examples exist.

A key lesson is that GUFs play an important role in helping trade unions deliver just transition. Just transition in agriculture is a new concept with many challenges for workers, particularly those in meat and dairy. To help affiliates tackle it, IUF brought together unions and experts to consolidate a global position and will deliver education, communication resources, and collective bargaining tools.

A second lesson is about building coalitions between labour and environmental movements. In Nigeria, this process started with the NLC's decision to develop a climate change policy. The federation worked with civil society organisations to achieve this. This policy in turn formed the basis for a joint project, exploring a very difficult issue – just transition in the oil and gas sector – and an issue on which the interests of labour and movements are well aligned – just transition in agriculture.

A final lesson is that activities at all levels are needed in order to achieve a just transition. In this case, the Nigerian Labour Congress combined national trade union discussions, dialogue with government representatives, local discussions with agricultural workers and farmers, alliances with social movements, technical work, and work with international partners including the Just Transition Centre. Subsequent steps could consider further resource coordination efforts.

## Just Transition in coal mining and oil production in Colombia

On a global scale, emissions from coal are still rising. Among the various energy sources available, coal remains a largely prevalent and low-cost source of energy. A transition requires, among other things, political and economic effort, inclusion of externalities in its pricing, economic diversification and addressing the impact on affected workers and communities<sup>90</sup>. A move towards lower carbon economies should not burden workers and or perpetuate inequalities.

### Colombia – environmental and climate commitments

Colombia has developed a Green Growth Strategy (CONPES 2018) and contains a set of policies connected to it, such as its national climate change policy and waste management policy, both approved in 2016, and its policy on sustainable construction from 2018. It has developed analysis methods for the potential of green jobs and the greening of enterprises. In late 2019 the Ministry of Labour signed an agreement with the ILO on promoting green jobs and work within a just transition framework.<sup>91</sup>

Colombia, in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (iNDC), indicated that in 2010 the country produced estimated greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) of 224 Mton CO<sub>2</sub>eq. Emitting sectors were agriculture, forestry, and other land use; energy; and waste and industrial processes. The iNDC target was set at 268 Mton CO<sub>2</sub>eq. by 2030.<sup>92</sup>

The government has set a target of 4 GW of non-conventional renewables (wind and solar) by 2030<sup>93</sup>. This would imply a 74 per cent share of renewable energy in the power generation grid, which is currently made up primarily of hydropower and thermal generation, including diesel. Ownership of generation is almost evenly split between public and private entities. However, since the government plans to meet its renewables target through tenders to private companies, the share of private ownership in the sector is likely to increase.<sup>94</sup>

### Coal, oil and gas sectors

The extractive industries in Colombia encompass over 30 different products, the most significant being coal (circa 11.9 per cent of exports from Colombia in 2015), ferronickel, precious metals and construction material. The production and use of oil are significant contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions. The use of oil for transport is responsible for 23 per cent of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Methane emissions from oil and gas production are also substantial, accounting for nearly 15 per cent of all energy sector greenhouse gas emissions<sup>95</sup>.

From a climate perspective, Colombia stands out as the world's fourth biggest coal producer and the biggest producer of coal in Latin America. Almost all of Colombia's coal production is for export.<sup>96</sup> Colombia is the third largest oil producer in Latin America through the majority state-owned company Ecopetrol<sup>97</sup> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, discussions were in progress on the privatisation of Ecopetrol<sup>98</sup>.

### Colombian trade unions

Colombia continues to be one of the world's most dangerous countries for trade unionists. Between 2019 and 2020, 14 trade unionists have been killed. In 2018 there were 34 assassinations of trade unionists, numerous attempted murders and nearly 200 documented death threats. Several of these cases have yet to be investigated and prosecuted.<sup>99</sup>

Colombian trade union density is 5.8 per cent in total, with a 2.8 per cent density in the private sector. Sixty per cent of all jobs are informal. Many jobs in traditionally secure sectors for workers – mining and oil and gas – have been outsourced. Colombian mining and oil and gas unions are affiliated to the global union federation IndustriAll.

### Impacts of COVID-19

The lockdown in Colombia has been particularly hard on poor and working-class people, with hunger crises reported in Bogotá and among indigenous communities around the country.<sup>100</sup>

The COVID-19 crisis has also had a dramatic impact on demand for oil and coal, two of Colombia's main export sectors. The International Energy Agency projects that global energy demand will drop by six

per cent in 2020, with electricity demand dropping by five per cent and the total share of gas and coal in the global energy sector dropping by three per cent to 2001 levels. Analysts expect that the global supply of coal will outstrip demand throughout 2020 and into 2021. Colombian oil production is expected to drop by 17 per cent. Investment in the sector is projected to fall by 55 per cent.

This will mean job losses in coal mining, coal transport, and oil and gas exploration and production. Immediate privatisation of Ecopetrol may now be less likely due to the current drop in value of oil and gas assets related to the oil price crash.

#### **Trade union responses in coal, oil and gas**

Colombian unions have a long-term vision for the country and its path to decarbonisation. They acknowledge the threat of climate change and the need for a just transition, recognising that demand for coal, oil and gas is likely to decline. They would like to see Ecopetrol, the state-owned oil company, remain in state hands and become a leader in the energy transition, with a mandate to develop renewable energy. They would also like to see a just transition process to devise plans and proposals for workers, regions, the company, and the country as a whole. Resources for this process and for plans should come from industry. The unions are seeking international cooperation to obtain ideas and concepts they can use for their own discussions.<sup>101</sup>

Before COVID-19, trade unions from the sector had begun planning for a just transition for coal and oil workers. Coal demand was declining and the possible decline also in the demand for oil, was putting jobs at risk. In 2019, a union-led workshop on just transition in 2019 was carried out. Unions, representatives from some coal producing companies, and representatives from IndustriAll, Mondiaal FNV, and the Just Transition Centre discussed the potential for a just transition. The unions concluded that it would be important to prepare for a shift away from coal, for example through the diversification of mining into other minerals, strong severance and pension agreements, and retraining and reskilling of workers.<sup>102</sup>

Multinational enterprises (MNE) own most of Colombia's coal mining sector. IndustriAll has

Global Framework Agreements with two of these, Anglo American and Glencore. IndustriAll has played a key role in supporting Colombian coal and oil unions in their efforts to ensure fair agreements with employers and, globally, in ensuring agreements on safe conditions for coal miners to return to work during COVID19.<sup>103</sup>

#### **■ ■ Lessons learned – best practice and challenges**

The workers in Colombia's coal and oil sectors need a just transition. Unions from the sector have been working on this, adopting positions and, via international support, being able to receive further technical assistance and launching discussions with employers. Social dialogue with the government is yet to take place.

As in Bangladesh, a key lesson learned is that in order to build societal resilience, it is important to guarantee the building blocks of just transition, such as social protection and the creation of decent work. At the end of 2019, Colombian coal and oil unions were ahead of employers and their government in pushing for change. Six months later, job losses have occurred overnight. IndustriALL's relationships with MNE mine owners may be strategic when negotiating agreements for laid-off workers.

A second lesson is that transitioning Ecopetrol to renewable energy early on would have protected jobs and revenues to some extent. Renewable energy companies have done relatively well during the COVID-19 crisis, at least compared to oil and gas companies. There is a wealth of union experience on which to draw. Unions in other countries, including South Africa, Norway and Denmark, are at different stages of transitioning state-owned energy companies from fossil fuels to renewables. Peer-to-peer learning and exchanges on this issue could be valuable. A sectorial dialogue could be extended, in a second phase, to include companies that are currently working in renewables in the countries in question.

Moreover, when social dialogue is not possible, trade unions can and should prepare their position on and analysis of which components are needed for a given sector to ensure a just transition.

Last but not least, current discussion and

cooperation on just transition via the ILO can provide interesting possibilities for social partners to engage in discussion on an array of sectors. The ILO has been carrying out potential entry point analysis for Colombia and is currently in dialogue with the Ministries of Labour and the Environment on steps to include just transition in the NDCs and to promote the participation of social partners. There is potential for increased collaboration, and increasing trade unions' engagement, in the forestry sector, for strengthened and bio-economy, including more efficient and sustainable biodiversity, leading to better products, processes and services based on knowledge and innovation, etc.

## Just Transition in recycling and waste picking in India

The production and disposal of solid waste is an important global climate and environmental issue. In 2016, solid waste management contributed at least five per cent to global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Although the world produces more than 2 billion tonnes of solid waste every year, only a third of this is managed in an environmentally sustainable way.<sup>104</sup>

### India's climate commitments

In its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution, India has committed to reducing the country's emissions intensity by 33 to 35 percent by 2030 in relation to 2005 levels. This is a whole-of-economy commitment without commitments for particular sectors, with two exceptions. First, India will increase the share of renewable energy in its installed power generating capacity to about 40% by 2030, with the help of technology transfer and international finance. India will also develop carbon sinks through forest and tree coverage.<sup>105</sup>

### The waste sector

India's rapidly growing cities and towns produce 62 million tonnes of municipal solid waste each year. This is expected to increase by five per cent per year as India's urban population grows and household incomes rise. Only 43 million tonnes of municipal solid waste are collected. Most of this waste ends up in dumps, posing hazards to health as well as generating emissions, as opposed to being treated or recycled.<sup>106</sup>

Indian informal workers and their associations  
Informal workers – waste pickers – play a central role in the management of solid waste in India. They are responsible for the recovery and recycling of 15–20 per cent of solid waste. Globally, between 15 and 20 million workers earn their livelihoods as waste pickers and recyclers. Of these a significant number are women.<sup>107</sup>

National laws often prohibit the registration of trade unions for informal and self-employed workers, such as waste pickers. Nonetheless, waste pickers in many countries have organised themselves in informal associations and cooperatives. Many waste picker associations are affiliated to global union federations and global networks, such as WIEGO and its Global Alliance of Waste Pickers.<sup>108</sup>

Initially, waste pickers and their organisations achieved success in some Indian municipalities through unionisation and negotiating formal contracts for waste picking with improved wages and conditions. A more formal status for waste pickers also reduced harassment by the police and other government officials.<sup>109</sup>

However, municipalities now are moving towards the privatisation of solid waste management and incineration. Tenders for solid waste management either explicitly exclude or discourage associations of waste pickers from bidding, while incineration eradicates the need for labour to sort and recycle waste. This displaces waste pickers and deprives them of their livelihoods, while providing uncertain or no benefits in terms of emissions reductions and materials reuse.<sup>110</sup>

### Impacts of COVID-19

The economic impacts of the lockdown have been severe. India's economy may have shrunk by 15 per cent in April, while the IMF reduced expectations for GDP growth to 1.9 per cent from 5.8 per cent.<sup>111</sup> Informal workers, have been particularly affected by the lockdown, as movement restrictions prevented them from leaving their homes to collect waste.<sup>112</sup> Those who are still collecting waste do not have personal protective equipment.<sup>113</sup>



**“Just transition means that organising and building up collective strength of informal workers is the shortest way of the transition towards formalisation.”**

Already as a child, Manali Shah was involved in trade union activities, when she joined her father at trade union meetings. She started working for SEWA as a legal coordinator in 1989 and was frustrated upon seeing how most of the workers were not covered by the minimum wage.

After a while, she learned how to combine the knowledge she gained from her studies with the work of SEWA. Today, she is National Secretary of SEWA, engaged in issues concerning just transition, unionisation and workers' rights, and the transition from informal to formal jobs for SEWA's members.

### Trade union responses

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) organises informal workers, including waste pickers. It has 1.8 million members, including (at one point) 30,000 of Ahmedabad's 40,000 waste pickers.<sup>114</sup>

SEWA organised an immediate response to COVID-19 for its members. This includes food distribution, cash transfer, health education and distribution of health kits, and advocacy work. But much more will be needed from the authorities, including income support to informal workers, organised food distribution, and loan relief and debt forgiveness.<sup>115</sup> It is not clear what the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 will be for India's waste pickers.

In 2004, the women waste picker's cooperative, organised by SEWA, negotiated a contract with the Ahmedabad Municipal Council (AMC) for collecting waste from 46,000 households. This resulted in decent livelihoods for 366 waste pickers and a door-to-dump solution for the recycling and reuse of solid waste.<sup>116</sup>

Subsequently, the AMC decided to put door-to-dump waste collection out to tender, as well as to build two incinerators. The AMC structured the tender so that workers' cooperatives were unable to compete for contracts. In 2017, SEWA mounted a legal challenge to the tender process and won a partial victory for its workers. The court ordered the AMC to require private contractors to hire waste pickers and to contract waste pickers to sort waste at collection and transit stations before private contractors transported the waste to the dump.<sup>117</sup>

### ■ ■ Lessons learned – best practices and challenges

SEWA's initial success in Ahmedabad arose from its successful organising. It achieved high density of unionised workers and attracted effective negotiators who struck good agreements with the

municipal government. After privatisation, SEWA was partially effective in a 2017 court challenge regarding the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's (AMC) privatisation of waste management.

Despite these victories, SEWA and its workers were unable to fight off privatisation entirely. They secured waste picking permits for a smaller group of workers post-privatisation, but the AMC barred them from reclaiming their position as providers of the full range of waste management services. SEWA's waste pickers are now engaged in a struggle on two fronts: with the AMC and private waste management companies, and with other, non-organised workers who are working illegally at the dumps to pick waste.<sup>118</sup>

In SEWA's view, higher-level political and legislative action is necessary to secure lasting benefits for waste pickers. They advocate for a high-level national commission to develop a national policy and plan for solid waste management, focused on waste pickers. The policy and plan should aim to maintain the livelihoods of waste pickers across India, improve their working conditions, and direct cities and municipalities to incorporate waste pickers and their organisations into urban waste management systems. Certain areas, such as door-to-door collection, should be reserved by law for traditional waste pickers.<sup>119</sup>

This indicates that a key lesson for securing just transition is that although trade unions can secure just transition measures via collective bargaining or other forms of social dialogue, these victories are often partial and not necessarily permanent. Therefore, safeguarding a just transition measure may require political and legislative action. Moreover, efforts to formalise informal work should be included when working within a Just Transition Framework for this sector.



In 2019, the magazine *Dagens Arbete* produced a reportage in Bangladesh with support from *Union to Union*. The reportage put a spotlight on workers' health and safety at tanneries in Bangladesh. Outside Dhaka, the waste from the tanneries is collected in large piles along the streets. Toxic fumes, solid waste, waste dumping and lack of adequate protection for workers are some of the challenges surrounding the leather industry. PHOTO: G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS PICTURES

Discussions among trade union members at a climate workshop in Kenya 2018 on how trade unions can influence and contribute to the country's national action plan on climate change. The workshop was part of a project with PSI, the Swedish trade unions Akademikerförbundet SSR, Vision and Kommunal, and 33 local trade unions in Jamaica, Kenya, Peru, Tonga, Tunisia and Zambia. PHOTO: ANNA NYLANDER



# Recommendations – raising the level of climate ambition through Just Transition

Based on the findings of this report and previous work in the area, *Union to Union* makes the following recommendations\*\*\* for continued work on just transition from an international development cooperation perspective:

## ■ International development cooperation organisations should increase their support to trade unions, including on issues related to just transition, climate change and biodiversity

The greening of economies should go hand in hand with promoting decent work. Social dialogue, which is a foundation for just transition, requires strong, democratic and representative trade unions. The case studies illustrate that jobs in lower carbon societies will not automatically be good and decent jobs. As shown by the 2020 ITUC Global Rights Index, compliance with labour rights has decreased and violence against trade unionists continues to be a challenge for the fulfilment of human rights. This undermines trade unions ability to contribute towards sustainable development. Development actors should include labour rights and its link with climate change, as a central theme in discussions with governments and employers in partner countries, and when drafting new cooperation strategies and operational plans.

Where labour rights are restricted and unions are weak, working and living conditions worsen. In the Philippines, the erosion of labour rights has increased precarious work. In India, workers' representation was the key to negotiating better working conditions and higher wages for waste pickers. Workers and their representatives can lead change, but it requires that an enabling environment for representation is safeguarded.

## ■ Development actors and trade unions should support and advocate for the incorporation of just transition strategies in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Supporting the inclusion of just transition in NDCs is advocating for policies that bring together social, economic and environmental perspectives

in the design of plans to reduce GHG emissions. Development cooperation actors could encourage parties to the UNFCCC to place labour rights as part of poverty reduction and equality. The submission of the second generation NDCs provides a brief window of opportunity for greater climate change ambitions through a just transition.

## ■ Development actors and trade unions should support capacity-building initiatives, including via online platforms, to increase knowledge on just transition, climate change and biodiversity

To ensure full, fair and active participation in social dialogue, social partners need to have the necessary expertise. As highlighted in the case studies from Nigeria and South Africa, once social dialogue and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes start, it is crucial that workers and their representatives have the ability and knowledge to engage.

Development actors could contribute by increasing support for capacity building to trade unions as regards knowledge on just transition and climate change, and by strengthening negotiation skills. Reasons to explore online and digital tools for capacity building included those related to cost efficiency, greater possibilities for South-South cooperation and peer-to-peer exchanges, and a reduction in adverse environmental impact caused by single-purpose trips.

As seen in the Nigerian, Indian and South African cases, proactivity will be required of trade unions in order to identify the critical components of a just transition for their productive sector, and how workers in that sector can provide to a better environment. Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs) and trade unions should, in turn, support workers in enhancing their knowledge on climate change and just transition. In several of the case studies, trade unions both contributed to and benefited from the support of development cooperation actors and international and regional union structures for training on just transition. As just transition will look different in

every sector, training material and efforts need to be adapted to sectorial, regional and country realities. ILO is leading work on just transition and is an important partner in capacity building initiatives.

■ **Development actors, Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs) and trade unions should support interventions at multiple levels that can lead to increased policy and resource coordination**

Advancing just transition requires local unions and national federations and confederations to lead and engage in national processes regarding just transition, climate change and biodiversity. As seen in the Philippines case, trade unions can drive change by coupling the creation of decent work with GHG emissions reduction strategies at the national level. At the same time, the trade union movement has benefited from its regional and international structures' engagement on the issues and their role should not be underestimated.

The Global Union Federations (GUFs) and the ITUC, including their regional organisations, have contributed with policies and advocacy, toolboxes on climate change and sector-specific training material, and have encouraged regional and sectorial information sharing. They build awareness among affiliates, encourage internal and democratic decisions and promote labour rights within bilateral and multilateral processes that local unions cannot engage in. Regional structures mean opportunities for policy and resource coordination, as well as international cooperation. TUSSOs, GUFs, the ITUC and trade unions could promote a reflection forum around just transition in which other development actors could participate in order to build network and alliances.

■ **Trade Union Solidarity Support Organisations (TUSSOs) and development actors should support the creation of a coordination mechanism for just transition**

Ensuring donor coordination is the key to increasing cost efficiency, developing strategic partnerships and finding synergies. As identified in the study, coordination between development actors on just transition is still limited and should be strengthened. TUSSOs could devise joint strategies and develop intervention logic together and in support of their trade union partners. Such efforts can explore different support modalities, analyse

alliances and coordinate with other development cooperation actors and civil society organisations (on a country by country basis). Moreover, harmonising donor reporting requirements could be included in the coordination efforts in order to lessen administrative burdens and maximise outreach. Joint strategies could include developing an information-sharing database on supported projects. The database could serve as inspiration for trade unions, coordination and peer-to-peer learning on key components of just transition and processes related to climate change negotiations via a capacity-building platform. The ILO could play a leading role in hosting such a coordination mechanism.

■ **Governments, development actors and social partners should ensure an environment that is beneficial to social dialogue and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes**

National governments have started to commit to green jobs creation and to just transition strategies. This requires formal social dialogue mechanisms so that just transition strategies can be designed at all levels – community, region, company, sector, and country. Guaranteeing workers' rights and supporting freedom of association are essential to advancing just transition. The role of social dialogue in this advancement could be further supported through initiatives such as the Global Deal and the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative.

■ **Social partners, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and development actors should analyse the COVID-19 recovery package responses and apply lessons learned to enhance climate change action and investments**

If the COVID-19 has demonstrated one thing, it is that crises aggravate vulnerabilities. The Bangladesh case study demonstrates that, in order to increase societal resilience, measures need to be in place before a crisis hits. It has been pointed out that in countries where workers and their representatives have been involved in shaping the COVID-19 responses, there has been less negative impact on society. There will be lessons to be learned from the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on supply chains. Those lessons must be harvested, analysed and translated into climate action and just transition plans.

Many stimulus and recovery packages contain measures for increased social protection,

particularly income support and health care, and funds and programmes to create jobs. Actions could include adding environmental and human rights conditionalities to recovery packages. Development actors could explore the development of policy markers around just transition as part of trade union development cooperation work, which would facilitate the monitoring of financing for development flows. Investments in skills assessment and skills training will be required during the shift to greener economies. Policy making needs to be informed by relevant labour market data, including skills anticipation and skills needs assessments. Programs and operations should also be based on knowledge based data. Investments in reskilling should address gender-biased norms and gendered sectors, and one way forward is to include gender budgeting in climate change interventions.

■ **Trade unions should build alliances on shared objectives, including with environmental organisations**

Building alliances with stakeholders with shared objectives remains a fruitful way to advance agendas that require social, economic and environmental issues to be addressed at the same time. In the Nigerian and Philippines case studies, establishing alliances outside more traditional

forms of alliance for trade unions, such as with environmental organisations, has proven successful. Finding common ground and conducting joint analysis from different perspectives is necessary to address the complexity of climate change. Trade unions have a role in safeguarding workers' rights, should be coordinated with diverse actors in civil society including external research institutions, think tanks, etc.

■ **Social partners and development actors could explore Human Rights Due Diligence as a tool to advance just transition**

Human Rights Due Diligence is gaining momentum. It could be explored as a tool for mapping supply chain improvement needs, including those related to reduction of environmental impact. Setting measurable targets that combine human rights and environmental standards could be a tool to map just transition advancements. The textile industry case study, for example, demonstrated the sector's twofold challenge: reduce its environmental impact and ensure workers' rights throughout its supply chain. This aligns well with other recommendations on the need to build alliances around common agendas.



# Footnotes

1 In South India for example, workers have been referred as the “Walking Class”. As a consequence of the lockdown, they were forced back to their hometowns in Northern India to try and find work in agriculture. Since public transport had been reduced, many had to walk long distances to get home. Around 165 people have been reported dead from accidents along the way.

2 Development actors include groups and organisations that carry out specific functions in society related to its development. They are national and international state agencies or civil society institutions and organisations.

3 (UNEP, 2019)

4 (UNEP, 2019)

5 (ITUC 2020a); (ILO 2020); (Harvey 2020).

6 (ITUC 2020b); (ITUC 2020c).

7 (Copernicus Climate Change Service 2020).

8 Building Back Better means include Recovery policies that trigger investment and behavioural changes that will reduce likelihood of shocks and increase society’s resilience to them when they do occur. Dimensions for assessing if “build back better” is included in recovery packages include alignment with long-term emission reduction goals, factoring in resilience to climate impacts, slowing biodiversity loss and increasing circularity of supply chains (OECD, 2020).

9 (OECD 2020)

10 (Nature Editorial Board 2020).

11 (Just Transition Centre 2017)

12 (ILO 2015)

13 (ILO 2015)

14 (United Nations n.d.)

15 (Government of Poland 2018)

16 (ILO 2019)

17 (Powering Past Coal Alliance n.d.)

18 (ILO 2015)

19 The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was drafted in 1992 during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The Rio Declaration contained 27 principles, including the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). CBDR principle establishes that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental issues but are not equally responsible.

20 (United Nations n.d.); (ILO n.d.); (ITUC 2018); (TUDCN 2019)

21 (ILO 2008); (ILO n.d.)

22 (ILO n.d.)

23 Note that not all issues have been pointed out by all trade union actors.

24 (ILO n.d.)

25 (World Bank 2018)

26 Ibid.

27 (Powering Past Coal Alliance n.d.)

28 See, e.g., (ITUC n.d.).

29 The survey exercise conducted during this study could provide a stepping stone for increased coordination.

30 (Blos 2020); (FES n.d.)

31 Case studies carried out by the Just Transition Centre were supplemented with additional interviews conducted by *Union to Union* and subsequently analysed through the lens of development cooperation possibilities. Trade unions are part of the TUSOs and *Union to Union*’s current development cooperation supported portfolio.

32 For the past seven years the ITUC Global Rights Index has analysed the world’s worst countries for workers by rating countries on a scale from 1 to 5+ on the degree of respect for workers’ rights. Violations are recorded each year from April to March. The survey is available for further consultation at [survey.ituc-csi.org](http://survey.ituc-csi.org).

33 (IEA 2019); (IEA n.d.)

34 Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2eq.). A metric measure used to compare the emissions from different greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential (GWP).

35 (Republic of South Africa 2016)

36 (IEA 2019)

37 (Eskom n.d.); (Minerals Council South Africa n.d.)

38 (Bhorat, Naidoo and Yu 2014); (ILOSTAT n.d.)

39 (Department of National Treasury, Republic of South Africa 2020)

40 (Burkhardt, South Africa Utility Eskom Warns Coal Suppliers 2020b)

41 (Burkhardt, Virus leaves South Africa’s Green Energy Plans in Disarray 2020a)

42 (Burkhardt, Virus leaves South Africa’s Green Energy Plans in Disarray 2020a)

43 (Davey 2020)

44 (Foster and Rana 2019)

45 (Vlahinic 2011)

46 (Bassanini 2015)

47 (Bloom 2020); (Republic of South Africa 2018); (National Planning Commission n.d.) (The Presidency, Republic of South Africa 2018)

48 (Congress of South African Trade Unions 2009)

49 (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa 2012)

50 (Nicolson 2020); (Independent Online (IOL) 2020)

51 (Mthethwa 2019); (Dlulane 2019)

52 (Congress of South African Trade Unions 2020)

53 (IRENA n.d.)

54 (Republic of the Philippines 2015)

55 Ibid.

56 (ITUC 2019b); (ITUC 2019)

57 (ITUC 2019b)

58 (ILO n.d.)

59 (Venzon 2020)

60 (Fitch Ratings 2020)

61 (Trade Unions for Energy Democracy n.d.)

62 (Uday 2019)

63 (Uday 2019)

64 (UN Environment Programme 2019)

65 (Hossain 2020)

66 Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF).  
67 (Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh 2015)  
68 (WTO, 2019)  
69 (Hossain 2020)  
70 (ITUC 2019a) ; (Ashraf and Prentice 2019)  
71 (Hossain 2020)  
72 (Bangladesh Occupational Health, Safety, and Environment Foundation 2020)  
73 (Anner 2020)  
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\*For this report, social partners are understood as groups that cooperate in working relationships to achieve a mutually agreed goal, typically to the benefit of all involved groups. Examples of social partners include employers, employees, trade unions, government, etc.

\*\*The Olof Palme International Center is the Swedish labour movement's umbrella organisation for international solidarity and advocacy.

\*\*\*All of *Union to Union*'s members (LO, TCO and Saco and their member unions) do not necessarily agree with the recommendations in this report.

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