

A Just Transition for the Global South



Learning from alliances and movements
in the Philippines and South Africa



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Contributors

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Philippines



Sweden and international actors



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Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPP	Independent Power Producers
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
NCTU	National Confederation of Transport Workers' Unions, Philippines
OPIC	Olof Palme International Center
SENTRO	Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa / Center for United and Progressive Workers (Philippines)



Typhoon Ketsana Anniversary in the Philippines. – © Toto Empainado / Greenpeace

Introduction

Our future is shared—and we must shape it together

The ongoing environmental and climate breakdown threatens our existence and all future development. We must all work together to stop this crisis. Already today, global heating has brutal consequences for hundreds of millions of people around the world with fires, floods, storms and droughts as well as infectious diseases. The climate crisis is reinforcing inequalities, deepening poverty and injustice.

The Paris Agreement includes the very central principle of justice; that workers and other vulnerable people who risk losing their jobs when we switch to a climate-friendly economy must be guaranteed a fair transition. This is core to the international trade union movement’s call for a ‘Just Transition’ towards a fossil free, socially, economically and environmentally sustainable world.

Olof Palme said in his speech at the first environmental conference in Stockholm in June 1972:

“I am convinced that we can find solutions, but it is absolutely necessary that we cooperate internationally. We are really, very much in a hurry. Solutions will require far-reaching changes in attitudes and community organisation.”

Almost 50 years later, we can see that the necessary changes have not taken place and that time is now even more scarce. But there is still a chance to make it happen. If we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that powerful measures can be found when we put our minds to it.

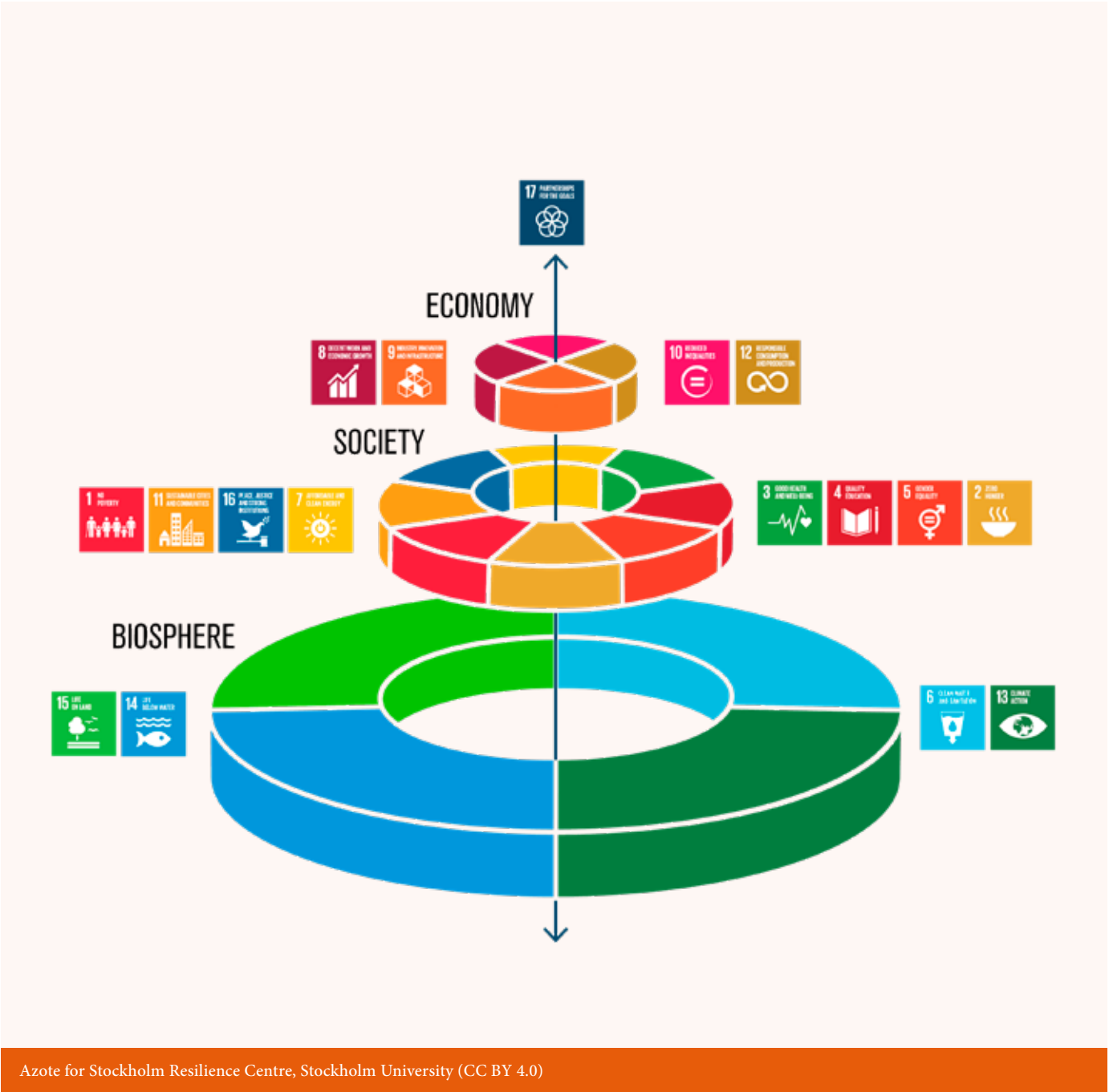
In fact, the road map is already there. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide direction and clear targets. Agenda 2030 is the most ambitious sustainable development agenda that the world has ever adopted and exists to achieve four fantastic things by the year 2030:

- Eliminating extreme poverty.
- Reducing inequalities and injustices in the world.
- Promoting peace and justice.
- Solving the climate crisis.

The degradation of our climate and environment is contributing to growing social tension, and increasingly to violent conflict. To handle these risks, what we need is not an arms race and traditional military defence, but a new way of looking at security—common security—a more solid foundation to build common global solutions.

Together, we face humanity’s greatest challenge. Together we must solve it. The need for international action remains acute. Multilateral cooperation holds the key, not putting your own country first and turning away from international cooperation. The rise of authoritarianism and nationalism is not only a democratic problem, but it also threatens our ability to respond to the climate and ecological crisis and thereby save humanity’s future on earth. We must face the challenges with a clear vision of inclusive and sustainable societies. We can do it—if there is courage and political will to put our common future first.

Anna Sundström
Secretary General
Olof Palme International Center and SOLIDAR
International Cooperation Forum Co-Chair



Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University (CC BY 4.0)

The road map: Agenda 2030. As this rendering of the Sustainable Development Goals shows, social and economic progress depends on the health of our living world.

SUMMARY

About Just Transition

The concept of Just Transition comes from the trade union movement. It has been taken up by governments and civil society who see the need for rights and justice in the response to the climate and environmental crisis. Workers and ordinary people should not be carrying the burden of reducing emissions.

For centuries, the Global North has built its economies on carbon emissions, accumulating vast wealth and creating extremes of global inequality. A world-wide Just Transition must take historic and current injustices into account and compensate the Global South for losses due to the climate crisis, ensuring that the costs are shared fairly.

The purpose of this study

In this study, leaders and activists in both the Global South and North reflect on the question:

“How can movement-building and alliances, citizens’ voices and social inclusion influence national policy, action and popular support for Just Transition? And what is needed to optimise the capacity of those involved?”

The study is intended to inform support and learning for a Just Transition in the Global South.

We chose the Philippines and South Africa as our two focus countries. Both face severe difficulties in transitioning away from fossil fuels, as well as with the impacts of the climate crisis. Twenty respondents from trade unions, civil society, academia and political parties in these countries were interviewed, along with labour support organisations in the Global North.

Who are the activists?

This study focuses on trade unions, civil society and political parties, as the structures leading the social engagement for a Just Transition in the Global South. They have slightly different, but overlapping positions and perspectives, they each play a role in Just Transition and have an opportunity to grow in their roles through more inclusive and connected alliances and movements.

Trade unions

Their role: Unions are the leaders in ensuring workers’ rights in a Just Transition. As industries move away from fossil fuels and other environmentally destructive practices, jobs will change, and some workers may lose their jobs while other new, green jobs are created. Unions are at the heart of ensuring that workers are properly consulted, and that opportunities for retraining, changing professions and financial safety nets are real and on a massive scale.

Rising to the challenge: Apart from the national trade union federations, knowledge and awareness of Just Transition among local and national unions is minimal in the Global South. Far more communication is needed with workers and between unions about the climate response, national commitments, changing industries and emerging opportunities. Worker education and influence will be critical to a Just Transition. Unions will also need to take more of a role collaborating with communities, including informal workers, and working both within sectors and across different sectors. Unions will need to anticipate and plan for the coming shifts. They will need to develop systems to ensure that union members and other workers get through these changes with decent jobs and social protection at the other end.

Civil society

Their role: Different organisations from small community groups through to major international NGOs all fall under the civil society umbrella. They work in activism and direct action, deliver services to people in need, do research, raise public awareness and build movements. They help to inform policies at global and national levels. They are also created through local level collectives to help within their communities or raise the voices of the most marginalised.

Rising to the challenge: The variety of civil society is both a strength and a weakness. These diverse groups don’t necessarily share the same vision, pull in the same direction or consult outside of their own group. People need to come together in movements and alliances, and take the time to work out a common goal and understand the different angles in a complex situation. For example, environmental activists might not fully grasp the impact on workers and their families and need to include the “Just” part in their advocacy for a green transition. At the same time, organisations working for human rights, including workers’ rights, need to push for urgent and feasible climate solutions, that are fair to those most affected. Civil society will play a more effective role if all its diverse members understand the bigger picture when demanding solutions, ideally in unison.

Political parties

Their role: Parties should serve as a link between citizens and political power, enabling people to contribute to political decisions. Progressive political leaders can become activists and champions with a lot of influence.

Governments trust their own internal advisors to draft policies, draw from research and reach a position that is influenced by the interests of many different actors in society. Good relationships in alliances help civil society and unions to support, guide and inform political champions for a Just Transition.

Rising to the challenge: Political parties and activists for policy change are part of the political system. They must work with election cycles, and demonstrate progress for Just Transition in a short period of time, while simultaneously trying to embed long-term reforms.

Theme 1

JUST TRANSITION OR TRANSITION TO JUSTICE

Radicalise Just Transition

The climate crisis is driven by capitalism. Capitalism drives inequality. Global injustice and the global economy are two sides of the same coin. We need to overturn the idea of eternal economic growth as a measure of wellbeing, rather than the fair distribution of resources, social wellbeing or environmental sustainability. We need to replace capitalism with a system with more equal distributive power and limits to wastefulness.

Much more than decent jobs

With its roots in global inequality, the climate crisis in the Global South is part of many different and historic challenges and injustices. The Global South has dealt with greater levels of gender injustice, land-grabbing, extractivism, poverty, lack of access to basic rights and services for centuries. Just Transition must address many injustices in the Global South—it is part of the bigger problems of society.

“The extractive industry inflicts a lot of harm and violence, on women’s bodies specifically. There is so much risk in our communities to women particularly—and so much repression.”

Civil society, South Africa

Women are most affected

Taking inequality further—where there are injustices, they affect women most. Women are most vulnerable, whether around unemployment or poor employment; livelihoods and access to land; health and wellbeing in places affected by pollution and climate disaster. Where there are other intersectionalities like poverty, disability, racialisation or indigenous people’s rights, the women among them are the most impacted. A Just Transition must place women at the centre.

Neoliberalism has hijacked the climate response

Instead of a shift to greater equality, however, respondents observed increasing privatisation, especially in the energy sector. After several decades of neoliberal economic decline and rising inequalities, corporate interests and capital are gaining even more power over the global economy.

Green extractivism: Same wolf, different clothing

The colonial concept that the Global South is a source of inexpensive raw materials for the North underpins the exploitation of resources and people for so-called green products. Mining for rare minerals has suddenly and dramatically increased due to increased demand for climate-friendly technology. These growing industries are linked to land-grabbing, pollution and the destruction of local ecosystems. Many of those fighting to protect their environment, land and livelihoods face extreme danger. Leaders, activists and communities are subjected to intimidation, violence and even assassination.



A Just Transition must place women’s needs and voices at the centre. – © Mujahid Safodien / Greenpeace

Theme 2

DEMOCRATISING A JUST TRANSITION: A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Eco-socialism

As well as national and global shifts, Just Transition is about taking local action and establishing local movements. People are asking for radical changes to the global economic system, at the same time as working for much more control of local issues by local people. Local movements are needed to enable broader access to both the benefits and the means of production.

Local movements reclaiming local power

Local action needs local level cooperation, coordination, participatory planning and management. These processes are not easy. People need to come together to find sustainable solutions to local problems. Communities may plan development in their area that fulfils their holistic social and economic demands while also maintaining and restoring the health of their natural heritage with the right information and support. Some of the factors that create success are:

1. **Representation**—as many parts of the community should be part of decision-making as possible.
2. **Transparency**—decisions and processes need to be openly shared.
3. **Trust**—those in the lead need to be trusted and utterly honest.



Farmers in Maguindanao are reviving indigenous, organic ways of growing food in order to protect soil and health. – © Grace Duran-Cabus / Greenpeace

“Farmers have the power and make the decisions. We have to focus on keeping power in the communities.”

Civil society, South Africa

No democracy without women

Women must have a seat at the decision-making table in a democratic society. Women's representation and influence is critical in government, unions, business, and civil society, as well as in male-dominated sectors, where national policy on Just Transition is shaped. Both women and men are conditioned in patriarchal systems, and Just Transition entails increasing women's awareness and confidence so that they may better assert their rights and a fair share of power.

Theme 3

ALLIANCES:

ORGANISING FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Turning the Titanic: Advocacy and activism for a Just Transition

To succeed, activism for social change involves a wide range of participants at different stages. Different spaces for demands complement each other—from protests and marches, to formal organisational engagement, to public awareness raising.

We heard accounts of campaigns that had succeeded in changing people’s local and even national circumstances. These usually involved a large and inclusive group, rallying around a clear demand. Better fishing rights, access to local development finance and public transportation laws are just a few examples.

These success stories are encouraging, but even small, local impact requires patience and persistence; and large-scale global or regional movements take time and encounter numerous hurdles and setbacks.

Although efforts are being made, the movement for a Just Transition in much of the Global South remains weak and fragmented, with no clear unified purpose.

Broad crises need broad alliances

Today’s challenges are monumental and intertwined. Alliances or other types of networks need to be formed around a strong and clear common cause. This is usually to demand (or resist) change for better conditions for the majority, the poor, workers and people who are being affected by social injustices. **The most effective campaigns are those that offer solutions, rather than “asserting principles, without dealing with concrete realities”.**

Reaching agreement on these solutions necessitates a thorough grasp of the challenges from various perspectives. It requires a coordinated effort from all sectors, communities, geographic regions and movements. If campaigns are to work, inclusive forms of cooperation are required to guarantee that demands are properly formulated to reflect the needs of society as a whole, not just a select few.

“Big demands require a wide range of communities to organise. ... Without organised communities, we cannot gain support. Without an organised group, we can’t have access to those who are most affected.”

Civil society, Philippines



The issue of privatised renewable energy is a major divider among potential allies on Just Transition. – © Luis Liwanag / Greenpeace

The need for unity in diversity

Diversity is both the greatest strength and the challenge of alliances and movements. Partners have different strengths and spheres of influence. They each have their own set of connections, abilities and information. Members of effective coalitions might be as varied as women’s groups, migrant’s groups, farmer or transport workers’ cooperatives, indigenous people’s movements, fisherfolk, youth, activists and political leaders. By its very nature, however, diversity is difficult.

“Alliance-building takes perseverance and patience in diverse cultures. There are many very fragmented organisations.”

Civil society, Philippines

The ideologies of trade unions and civil society may differ. The priorities of northern and southern movements may differ. Within civil society, the green movement and the Just Transition movement disagree on the pace and processes for change.

“Although we have always worked well with civil society and community organisations, the difference in ideologies plays a huge role in this contested issue of a Just Transition. The trade union organisation heavily believes in socialism—that workers must own the means of production—and believes that the State has a significant role to play, especially when it comes to renewable energy generation. We found a rift with the renewable energy Independent Power Producer programme. The civil society organisations love it, whereas we felt that privatisation of the renewable energy sector was a problem.”

COSATU, South Africa

These discrepancies hinder the Just Transition movement and may have left the door open for the all-too-eager corporate sector to influence national and global policy decisions.

Theme 4

DECENT JOBS IN A GREEN ECONOMY

Reluctant unions and mistrust of a Just Transition

Unions have democratic decision-making systems in place to ensure that their members are represented. Their responsibility in a Just Transition is to ensure the well-being of the workers in the industries and workplaces they represent.

Job losses are catastrophic in the Global South, particularly in countries with high levels of unemployment and poverty. Although unions accept that job losses are unavoidable, they are sceptical that the change will be fair to workers. **They doubt that the promise of ‘new green jobs’ will be achieved, and that these jobs will be of the quality, stability and quantity of those being lost.**

“The context that raises the biggest flags is the mining sector. It is difficult to see a win where the whole community’s livelihood depends on mining or coal-fired power stations. How do you create a patch of green politics for the people who are most faced by the injustice of transitions?”

Political party, Philippines

“There is pressure [on unions] to articulate progressive positions on the issue, but I don’t know how to deal with the tension of jobs. I am being told a narrative of change—but I see nothing to show how we can take care of jobs. That for me is the biggest tension.”

Union support, South Africa

New green jobs or precarious exploitation?

Precarious employment, with inadequate workers’ rights or education, poor health and safety standards, low-paid and dangerous work, and workers’ dependency on these jobs for survival, are a common feature of new and rising sectors in the Global South, particularly in the mining industry. Many of the work environments are significantly harsher than those found in well-established sectors.

“To move from coal to renewable energy you need minerals. That means more mining of critical minerals, and also much more recovery and recycling of minerals. Right now, the jobs, especially in the recycling and recovery of minerals, are terrible. They’re informal, dangerous and poorly paid. And so you would want to focus on organising, and trying to affect flows of capital around the sector, and getting policy in place in different countries, both North and South ... in the constant collective fight to make all jobs good.”

Union, International

Owning the means of production

Unions are concerned that new and privatised sectors will replace unionised industries, resulting in the loss of the progress achieved for decent jobs over decades of union struggle.

One idea is to strengthen workers’ cooperatives. Another has been to ensure that smaller local businesses can engage at the municipal level. Local and worker-centric competition is required against huge, well-funded multinational firms that are already investing in local energy and renewables, and against which smaller operations cannot compete without some form of government protection.



New “green” jobs—but are they decent? Filipino workers recycling plastic in San Fernando face exposure to chemicals.

Theme 5

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY FOR A SOUTHERN JUST TRANSITION

Global linking and influence

Unions are at the heart of Just Transition, working with governments and employers on a local, regional and global scale. **Global Union Federations**, which represent hundreds of millions of workers around the world, are important networking sites for North-South issues concerning Just Transition. Their national and local union affiliates are well-positioned to engage governments and corporations, as well as to keep workers informed and included.

Major international NGOs are also active in the drive for a Just Transition, especially those which support labour or have a lead role in defining a just response to the climate crisis. They use their position, credibility and connections to help and influence governments in both the North and South. They have the ability to build bridges for southern movement partners. Their appetite to learn from and be guided by southern voices helps to ensure that they are relevant and constructive.

Embassies in the Global North and South are designed to connect governments internationally. They should be well-informed and capable of advocating for the Global South's Just Transition agenda. The Just Transition movements could support embassies to fulfil this role far better.

Financing Just Transition

Green funding flows to the South are slow—a fraction of agreed commitments. While the climate emergency is acknowledged as a global crisis, far more is being invested in the Global North than in the South to ensure an effective climate response, as well as safety nets for workers and affected communities.

Green financing appears to go straight to governments and private players, and not always with the requirement that it must be utilised in ways that are consistent with the ideals of a Just Transition. Local actors and civil society have little or no knowledge of how money from global programmes like the Green Climate Fund can be accessed.

Northern allies in solidarity have a role in ensuring that funds do reach the Global South and do contribute to a Just Transition. Funding should go both to national governments to support economies through the crisis and also, in small and flexible flows, to locally designed, led and implemented initiatives to build from the ground up.



A call for climate justice at Shell headquarters in Manila. Joanna Sustento leaves a photo of her nephew lost during typhoon Haiyan. – © Geric Cruz / Greenpeace

Global legislation for Just Transition

Global laws and United Nations conventions that are ratified by countries can create a clear demand for national compliance to standards. The existing **ILO standards on Occupational Health and Safety**, both for workers and for environmental protection, as well as **the Sustainable Development Goals**, are examples of legislation that demand social and environmental justice.

Progress is being made toward legislation that holds businesses accountable for their environmental and social impact, with unions

also realising that the worst kinds of worker and environmental exploitation are frequently interwoven. These initiatives include, for example, a global law against **ecocide** being promoted in the International Criminal Court, and a campaign in the European Union Commission to ensure **human rights and environmental due diligence**.

These laws, while admirable, cannot be designed just for the benefit of northern interests. They must also be negotiated with the southern supply chain and constructed in such a way that workers in affected industries are protected while employers are held accountable for their role in the climate response.

About this study

The organisations behind this report

This study has been commissioned by the Olof Palme International Center (OPIC) and SOLIDAR. These are solidarity international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from the labour movement and the progressive left, largely based in Europe, which partner with labour, civil society and social movements around the world. Just Transition is one of their core themes. They fund or otherwise support partner organisations to effectively take part in working for a Just Transition in their countries and regions. They also strongly support cooperation and partnership for solidarity and shared learning and encourage their partner organisations to form alliances and exchange experiences.

Olof Palme International Center is the Swedish labour movement’s umbrella organisation for international solidarity and advocacy. The Palme Center works globally for democracy, human rights, peace and social justice in the spirit of Olof Palme, supporting progressive movements and parties around the world.
www.palmecenter.se

SOLIDAR is a European and worldwide network of over 50 CSOs working to advance social justice through a Just Transition in Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the concerns of its member organisations to the European Union and international institutions across the policy sectors social affairs, international cooperation and lifelong learning.
www.solidar.org

With this strong interest in Just Transition, these agencies have asked partners and activists in South Africa and the Philippines to participate in a research study on alliances and movements in support of a Just Transition in the Global South. This report presents the views of these research participants, with a selection of online literature that confirms or expands on their points.

Why alliances and movements? What we hope to achieve with this study

The study was guided by the question: *“How can movement-building and alliances, citizens’ voices and social inclusion influence national policy, action and popular support for Just Transition? And what is needed to optimise the capacity of those involved?”*

The Palme Center and SOLIDAR share a commitment as allies to supporting and strengthening our southern partners in reaching their goals. We believe that it is essential that people come together in strategic networks and alliances to achieve these shared goals.

In this research we wanted to learn from alliances and movements in the Philippines and South Africa about how to strengthen the collective power of civil society, trade unions and politics in order to achieve a just and democratic green transition for the Global South. The study seeks to understand how organisations of all kinds can build a critical mass of interest, understanding and action.

In addition, we wanted to find out what kind of support southern leaders and movements would like from northern partner organisations. The results will shape our capacity development and support for a Just Transition in the Global South. We also hope that the findings will enable learning within and between the Philippines and South Africa, and other Global South countries, pointing to opportunities for collaboration.

Method

The research was conducted between May and November 2021.

A light desk review was conducted of literature mainly on the Philippines and South Africa, focused on context, alliances and movements, which does not claim to have captured all the most relevant articles on this vast topic.

We then discussed the Just Transition movement with leaders and activists in the two countries, and international stakeholders in the union movement who are involved in Just Transition work with partners in the Global South. These interviews and the observation of some conveniently timed seminars provided the main sources of information.

Semi-structured interviews gave a great deal of freedom to respondents to share their experiences around alliance and movement building for a Just Transition. We asked about their achievements and challenges, the specific implications for women, and how the Global North might best serve them as allies.

A total of 32 people from 23 organisations participated in interviews (25 respondents) and/or a workshop (20 participants).

Numbers of study participants and organisations, per sector, per method, per country

A workshop was then convened for all research participants and others. The main themes that had emerged from the interviews were shared, and the participants helped to elaborate and refine them.

We then discussed the actions that might best help to drive forward the Just Transition movement in the Global South.

The research has tried to uphold principles of visibility and recognition. The work of contributors to this growing knowledge base is recognised and appreciated, and their organisations are acknowledged with their permission (inside cover). Individual contributors are warmly thanked for their expertise and insights (Annex).

While acknowledgement is a value we seek to uphold, it can conflict with the risks faced by actors who are vulnerable to persecution in oppressive and dangerous situations. We have been careful to confirm the consent of those named and have maintained anonymity for quotes shared in the text.

We have attempted to authentically reflect the diverse perceptions, opinions and experiences of study participants. It is important to note that, although there is a lot of agreement, participants do not necessarily share all of each other’s views. It should also be noted that the points made do not necessarily reflect the views of the researchers, or the positions of the Palme Center or SOLIDAR.

	Unions	Civil society		Political parties	Academia
		Labour support	Other		
Number of participants					
South Africa	2	1	6	1	1
The Philippines	5	1	6	1	
International	3	1	4		
Number of organisations					
South Africa	1	1	4	1	1
The Philippines	3	1	4	1	
International	3	1	2		

Just Transition: Context matters

Just Transition: How it began and what it demands

The term 'Just Transition' comes from North American labour and was first used by trade union activist Tony Mazzochi in 1993 ¹. The European Trade Union Confederation has been studying how the climate response affects jobs since 2006 ². In 2015, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) included a drive for Just Transition in negotiations leading up to the Paris climate agreement ³, sharing a vision for a systemic or 'whole of economy' approach to reducing emissions.

Although rooted in the global labour movement, Just Transition has also been embraced by civil society activists and many governments as being crucial to meeting climate and environmental goals without causing increased economic hardship for ordinary people.

The work for a Just Transition differs, depending on contexts and interests. Most actors agree, however, that without security and opportunity for workers and affected communities, people will resist climate action, rather than putting their energy and commitment into supporting it.

The ILO has demanded that the Just Transitions be founded in an increase in the quality and number of 'Green Jobs' ⁴, an idea expanded by the International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) Just Transition Centre to decent work that protects the environment becoming the norm in all situations ⁵. A Just Transition, for example, must help informal sectors adapt and demand that informal jobs become decent. It includes solutions for the impact of global changes on national economies, and must support those whose livelihoods depend on natural resources to adapt to climate and environmental disasters.

Actors like SOLIDAR and the Palme Center refer to the established labour definitions but also take an even wider 'social justice' view, seeing Just Transition as a concept that brings the social, climate and environmental justice agendas together ⁶.

These many aspects make a Just Transition highly complex. The ILO asserts that good planning is essential to achieve a Just Transition.

“Transition can be abrupt and damagingly disruptive when unplanned or under-planned, even traumatic. Effort will be required to ensure that it is indeed just.” ⁷

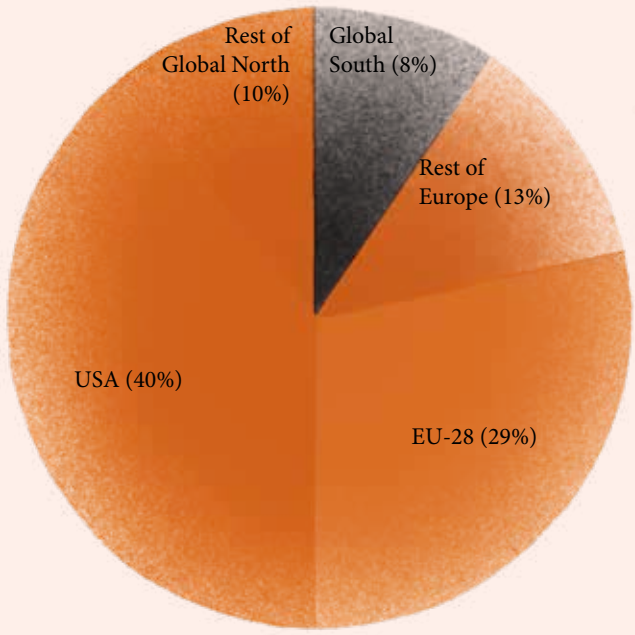
Planning depends on communication and cooperation within and between sectors. These are some of the capacities which the Palme Center and SOLIDAR seek to support in their work with partners across the world.

A Just Transition in the Global South

Centuries of colonialism, followed by the ongoing exploitation of labour and resources, have laid the foundations of the wealth of northern nations, while leaving many southern countries impoverished and unstable.

The Global South also grapples with global **carbon inequality**. Countries in the Global North have caused the climate breakdown and continue to fuel it. Neither the economic effects of reducing climate-destructive industries nor the costs of adapting to climate impacts should be shouldered primarily by the poorest—but without proactive and coordinated efforts to do these things in a just way, this is exactly what is happening. The Global North owes a **climate debt** to the Global South, where people are more heavily impacted by extreme climate events.

Who caused the climate crisis?



The Global North was responsible for approximately 92% of the climate crisis

Source: The Lancet ⁸. The slices show each country's share of responsibility for global cumulative CO2 emissions in excess of the safe planetary boundary (a 350 ppm concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere). The calculation is based on the principle that all people have equal per capita access to the atmospheric commons. The diagram reveals each country's overshoot of their fair share of emissions.

In order for the climate response to build up, rather than diminish, southern economies, a Just Transition in countries such as South Africa and the Philippines must address two challenges. It must make major changes to economies that are based on extractive industries to achieve zero emissions and environmental sustainability. At the same time it needs to secure, and indeed increase, the economic wellbeing and livelihoods of the majority.

To achieve this, civil society, trade unions and politics must come together. A well-informed and united movement needs to advocate for a Just Transition and cooperate to achieve the best possible outcomes for all. To assist this drive, this study focuses on alliance and movement building for a Just Transition in the Global South.

The Philippines and South Africa: Learning from two of the world's most difficult contexts

“When Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013, the economic loss was equivalent to more than 5% of gross domestic product and over 5.9 million working people were affected. Of these, some 2.6 million were already in vulnerable employment, at or near the poverty line.” ⁷

For this study we have asked leaders and activists in South Africa and the Philippines to share their views on the social aspects of a Just Transition and how alliances and movements can contribute.

These two countries have been chosen as examples of some of the world's most difficult contexts for a Just Transition. Both countries face severe challenges in both cutting climate emissions and adapting to climate disasters. They deal with severe social and economic inequalities. They rely on carbon heavy industry and they are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, being regularly devastated by typhoons, droughts, floods and fires.

“They aren't sure if they will be harvesting with typhoons and floods.”
Civil society, Philippines

Even without the need to rapidly reduce climate emissions, both South Africa and the Philippines also deal with severe poverty, skewed distribution of wealth, unemployment or a lack of decent work, corruption and violence. COVID-19 has greatly worsened their situations, and unemployment rates have swollen as businesses have folded.

Snapshots of the social and economic state of the two countries



The Philippines

- 1 Severely limited civic space, extrajudicial violence and high risk of state persecution ⁹.
- 2 Ranked as **one of the world’s ten worst countries for working people** in the ITUC’s Global Rights Index ¹⁰.
- 3 Ranked 34th most unequal country in the world with a Gini Coefficient* of 44 ¹¹.
- 4 Rate of unemployment: 10% in 2020 ¹²
(Combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force).
- 5 78% of electricity generated from coal, gas and other fossil fuels ¹³.



South Africa

- 1 Civic space is relatively open and accessible, with freedom of speech, movement and peaceful protest.
- 2 **The world’s most unequal country.**
(Has a Gini Coefficient of 63 ¹¹).
- 3 **Rate of unemployment = 42% in 2020** ¹²
(Combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force).
- 4 85-90% of electricity generation from coal - 7th largest coal producer in the world ¹⁴.

**The Gini Coefficient is a measure of inequality of incomes and wealth in a country.
0 = perfect equality,
100 = maximal inequality.
Values of 40-50 = big income gap.
Values above 50 = severe income gap*

FINDINGS

Three actors—
one purpose

This research focused on three kinds of organisations who are working for a Just Transition: unions, civil society and political parties. They were selected as the actors that engage with government, businesses and international organisations to raise the concerns of workers and communities in a just climate response. They are generally left-of-centre in their ideology. The study has not engaged with the ‘other side’—the state and private sector.



Unions in a context
of Just Transition

Organising beyond the union
in the Philippines

Union culture in the Philippines is unconventional, especially among smaller, more locally present unions. **They offer open and inclusive organising. They often convene more than just workers—to include informal workers, civil society and politicians.** They regularly initiate and lead alliances of organisations and individuals around common causes and are almost always members of alliances led by others.

As with any opposition voice in the Philippines, unions are persecuted, and rigid structures may be more vulnerable to attack. As workers alone, they have less access to citizens’ voices than more inclusive movements. With low levels of unionisation in the workforce, broader representation gives their campaigns far more legitimacy.

“We only have I think less than 10% union density. So, how do you make a compelling case for the 90% not belonging to the organised labour?”
Political party, Philippines

While local level union leadership and influence are part of the Filipino culture of organising, bringing labour together at the national level can be difficult. SENTRO, a national level union partner of the ITUC, has managed to consistently work at national level in wide-ranging alliances and has been able to influence Just Transition national strategies and laws. However, some other major unions with large memberships were not seen to prioritise alliance-building and did not back popular campaigns. This limits access to their members and their support for a unified position.

“Although alliances gather significant numbers, major trade unions with massive membership will not be members of the alliance, and if they do not join together they cannot convince the legislators to pass a law for job security.”

Civil society, Philippines

The South African labour movement

The labour movement in South Africa has been organising for black workers for over a hundred years. Today’s unions and the national union federation, COSATU, are active and well supported by workers. COSATU has been engaged in advocacy for a Just Transition since the concept was launched, supporting the ILO’s movements with position statements as far back as 2009¹⁵. In consultation with a range of partners, COSATU has defined a position in a climate policy framework¹⁶. This has helped to guide advocacy and policy input for the national climate response. The COSATU climate policy is now being revised and updated, as the federation continues to actively engage government, affiliates and social process to negotiate the challenges of a Just Transition.

Unions in the country have well-established democratic and hierarchical structures which ensure that they are representative and are guided by worker mandates. Unionised sectors have better quality, less precarious jobs. Although democratic decision-making can be slow, once members support a position, unions can galvanise to exert significant power.

“Democracy also makes them unwieldy—they can’t move without enough consensus—if they did, it would be the end of them. But once you have that consensus, you move!”

Civil society, International

Although this traditional structure is a source of power for unions, it is also their main challenge. While COSATU, as the primary national union federation, is able to negotiate on broader social issues—they recently bargained for grants for the poor during lockdown and asked for and got the Presidential Coordinating Commission on Climate Change, tasked with developing a nation-wide Just Transition plan—individual unions in the country find this more difficult. Their systems mean that they focus mainly on collective bargaining for members, who, by definition, are already in the workforce. This means that although they are representative and democratic, they are also rather conservative, bureaucratic, industry-focused and inward-looking.

With these strengths and limitations, the challenges of a Just Transition are not easily mainstreamed into the priorities of the different South African unions. Through their union federations, however, unions do negotiate broad social issues in the National Economic Development and Labour Council, even if its impact is contested. COSATU represents its member unions in national platforms, talking to both government and other parts of society and taking a perspective that spans multiple sectors.

Despite this, given the high rates of unemployment and informal jobs, and the loss of large-scale industries, labour in South Africa needs to expand its definitions, systems and roles if it wishes to be relevant to more South Africans. A Just Transition is beyond the boundaries of any single sector and has impacts that reach far wider than union membership.

“We need to aim at informal economies and unprotected workers in marginal situations, which are outside of traditional trade union processes.”

Civil society, International



COSATU on the march in Johannesburg. -
© Dinky Mkhize, Creative Commons

In this vein, COSATU has established a dedicated department to lead on the Just Transition discussion, and to reach out for alliances with civil society and academia in support of advocacy to government and employers for labour and environmental justice.

Weakening unions

Unionism, globally, was described as weakening and fragmenting as a result of ‘*institutionalisation and the sapping of resources through twenty years of neoliberalism*’ (Civil society, International). Respondents described the global union movement as having declined in the last decade, with dwindling formal employment and steadily diminishing membership. The right to organise freely is also under attack in many countries, with labour activists facing increasing persecution, as the ITUC’s yearly Global Rights Index shows¹⁰.

Despite these trends, traditional unionism does still have a critical role in demanding workers’ rights, and any expansion or reinvention does not reduce their importance in workplace negotiation.

“In any occupation, unionised people earn more and have better conditions. So they must continue organising and representing—and use the decent work indicators of the ILO.”

Civil society, International

Building union power and influence for a Just Transition

A Just Transition requires some new approaches from unions. It requires anticipating and planning for change at scale, both within sectors, across whole economies and in the interests of both members and non-members. Unions in stable, established sectors, such as energy and mining, will need to reinvent themselves in order to ensure that union members and other workers get through these changes with decent jobs and social protection at the other end.

Likely changes involve more than technology shifts. Unions may face a situation in which global systems of production are dismantled and put together in a different way, and the major pillars of industry and energy are suddenly replaced.

Unions live in society. They are deeply involved in and affected by the concerns of the many non-unionised people around them. Study respondents from union allies and supporters in civil society suggested that unions should embrace new ways of understanding labour.

“They rely on their tried and tested methods, and are becoming ineffectual. To become relevant beyond their membership, and in issues beyond those concerns, they need to expand their engagement and definitions of membership.”

Civil society, International

“If unions are really sincere about understanding that they are part of communities, then go back to local union people and get them involved in activities. More democratic unions have to be local. Maybe rebuilding that local hub is a union alternative.”

Civil society, South Africa



Rural women's group – © John Robinson / Greenpeace

Civil society and Just Transition

Organising in diversity

A vibrant civil society is vastly diverse. It ranges from loose local clusters of people concerned about immediate and practical challenges to international agencies leading, influencing and financing global concerns. By its very nature, civil society is unstructured, amorphous, and not necessarily aligned behind a common goal or approach.

To form a collective around a Just Transition, civil society must be able to encourage and enable diverse participation. Differences in philosophy and niche can be enriching, as long as basic values are shared. Successful alliances depend on being able to bring together diverse approaches under a shared common goal.

Local responsibility, local action

Rich civil society collectives emerge naturally at local level, including women's groups, farmers' societies, other rights activists and any number of common identity groups. Although they might not especially identify with 'Just Transition' as a term, many were fighting for environmental justice and equity long before the overdue popularisation of a climate crisis response.

Their work might include, among much more:

1) Direct action at local level: Direct action may be taken to achieve, for example: sustainable food production or fairer distribution of food; innovative sanitation solutions; entrepreneurship to improve local livelihoods; water and ecosystem conservation; appropriate housing; social welfare for those affected by disasters of any kind. When poor services and extremes of inequality reach boiling point, direct action can sometimes extend outside the law, and lead to public or private land invasions and local anarchy.

2) Local level organising: Community leaders, whether formal or informal, may gather people together to work to improve their situation. These groups are necessary for sharing information, considering options, making decisions, formulating advocacy demands and strategies, and taking direct action.

3) Local level, often high-risk activism: Local people who object to environmental or social abuses in their communities might campaign against, for example, open cast or other locally destructive mining, industrial water pollution, land grabbing, local corruption and job losses.

Although local level actions may be small-scale, fragmented, inconsistent and often barely at subsistence level, they are sometimes the only action being taken when there is nothing else.

Within paralysed or corrupt states, where there is limited policy implementation or service provision, the dream of big, structural economic rejuvenation projects seldom materialises, and local people try to fill the gap while they wait.

At national level, civil society is vast and varied. It might offer, for example, legal advocacy, media and awareness raising, labour support and environmental justice activism. It might provide information and technical expertise, and in many cases will have the confidence and vocabulary to engage with national or municipal policy. Its main limitation, as a generalisation, is a tendency to make demands, without offering or implementing solutions. **Ambitious activism that demands that the duty bearer finds solutions has some value. Activism is even more effective, however, if there is also legal or technical advocacy, which tables research and feasibility studies to show how demands can realistically be met.**

At a global level, civil society that connects with the Global South may offer partnership and organisational, financial or research support to sister organisations, as well as in some cases to unions and political parties. Within civil society, trade unions' solidarity organisations offer specific support to unions. These organisations may monitor and promote human rights and Just Transitions. They can be powerful allies, bridging the global and national discussions, lobbying for international support, collecting and sharing aggregated data, and offering evidence for issues of concern, as well as being conduits for the funding of national or local interventions ¹⁵.

The dance between survival and influence

Civil society organisations are usually sincere in their aspirations for a better world and they generally share values regarding rights, justice and social upliftment, although these can sometimes be misplaced or contradictory. Unfortunately, however, civil society organisations can often be as competitive as they are cooperative, because they depend on funding for their survival.

These forces mean that there is often a tension between an organisation's ambitions for itself, and solidarity with partners. This can create sub-groups that choose some allies and exclude others. Despite this, civil society often works quite harmoniously—building networks with the aim of benefitting society and cooperating for a common cause.

Another criticism, from the labour movement in particular, is that without formal systems of representative democracy, organisations may be inspired by the vision of a single charismatic individual. Its participants 'vote with their feet' and only an organisation that is trusted and supported will attract an interested constituency.

Instead of broad democratic representation, civil society often builds its credibility on data. Although research is selective, it helps to provide evidence to justify a position; inform advocacy and actions; allow progress and trends to be monitored; generate information to demand accountability.

Political parties—potential champions for transition

Political parties play a crucial role in the way in which democracy functions. They are key actors in the struggle for democratic, free and equitable societies, and fundamental to decision-making and policy from local to national levels.

Parties should serve as a link between citizens and political power, enabling people to contribute to political decisions. In parties with a democratic structure, members influence the general direction through decisions at party congresses.

Once in government, politicians trust their own internal advisors to draft policies, draw from research, and reach a position that is influenced by the interests of many different actors in society. They are responsible for finding the right path, while they engage with the many powerful and less powerful players lobbying for different positions. Politicians and public sector leaders must gather these different viewpoints, consider conflicting interests, collect the facts and aim for a wise decision in often difficult dilemmas.

Inside government and parties, leaders may be activists in their own right. They can exert influence as party champions for certain goals, although their advice may be overturned by the sometimes less objective agendas of people in positions of power.

“Within the ANC and its alliance partners, there are people and activists who feel very strongly about environmental issues. They are aware about climate change issues—about climate justice. So it’s a push from within the membership of the ANC... and our own thoughtful champions are on the same wavelength. They have relationships into academia, labour and civil society, and vice versa. They are interested. They are concerned.”

Political leader, South Africa

How unions and civil society collaborate with progressive politicians in the Philippines

Political engagement is a core strategy among activist respondents in the Philippines, where social democrats are part of both political structures and activist movements. Politicians are trained, supported and backed by unions, civil society and activists. They are able to use arguments, data and evidence from these partners to try to influence better policy while they have a seat in government. Supporting progressive parties and their candidates is a continuous process. Politicians may win a seat for one cycle, and then be replaced in the next.

“When a new set of officials is elected, they want to erase the past. The new elected person will not want to touch what the old one supported, so you don’t know whether the people you are talking to now are the ones you will be working with in the next two or three years. You may need to repeat everything you have done.”

Civil society, Philippines

Election cycles also create pressure to make a rapid, visible difference to voters’ lives, so that parties have more chance of being voted in again. One difficulty is that a single election cycle is seldom enough time to shift policy, implement change and achieve visible impact. **Just Transition requires long-term thinking and investments for the common good. The current short-term perspective of election cycles is a very real obstacle.**

“Energy policy is very tricky. It takes infrastructure, it takes resources, and in an election cycle it might not even show the fruits. If by one election cycle, we cannot produce what we have promised, then all the more people will not buy into this.”

Political party, Philippines

In both South Africa and the Philippines, progressive politicians are supported through education specifically designed for them.

Example: Network for Social Democracy in Asia runs an online academy that has prepared hundreds to take on party roles and includes Just Transition

This Filipino academy helps young politicians to learn and explore the ideology of ‘social democracy’. It encourages them to lead a Just Transition that deeply transforms society.

The academy also teaches, among other themes, practical skills for

climate negotiation: how to push for environmental justice through legal systems, labour rights, and participatory social and environmental planning.

“We (the Soc Dem Asia academy) have about 250 alumni of the full training course. Most of our graduates become politicians—local and national members of parliament. Others become party workers who hold portfolios to aid their parliamentarians and party leaders.”

Political party, Philippines



Congresswoman Mila Magsaysay speaks in La Union, Philippines, during a celebration of the move to make two of its municipalities coal-free. – © Greenpeace / Grace Duran-Cabus



1

JUST TRANSITION
OR TRANSITION TO
JUSTICE

A Just Transition in the Global North tends to focus on dismantling fossil fuel industries and promoting jobs in renewable industries for Global North workers. In the Global South, Just Transition is about jobs too, but it must also address the quality of those jobs, global and national inequality, social injustices and climate impacts. North-South inequality is rooted in history and colonialism. A Just Transition needs to strive to correct the many historic injustices in these societies.

What should a Just Transition in the Global South achieve?

All respondents saw Just Transition as an opportunity, and an imperative, to address the wider social and economic injustices in society.



© Basilio H. Sepe / Greenpeace

“We have a planetary crisis and an inequality crisis affecting jobs, security, health, democracy and organised society. We can’t address the climate crisis without addressing the inequality that is creating it ... the rich producing emissions, while the poorest are hardest hit. There is unequal access to power and decisions on how to address the planetary crisis based on class, age, gender, race. Just Transition must address both the planetary crisis and the inequality crisis at once.”

Civil society, South Africa

The ILO agrees that Just Transition has to be about a broad social transformation.

“A Just Transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy ... needs to be well managed and contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty.”¹⁷

Globally, Just Transition helps to guide the changes needed in industries and employment—as well as being concerned about people in informal work, the unemployed and people with subsistence livelihoods. This is especially important in the Global South where unemployment, precarious work and difficult livelihoods are most extreme.

While universal decent climate-friendly employment is certainly one pathway to social justice, the people we spoke to described multiple other ways of tackling injustice. Just Transitions have to address national inequality, gender injustice, unfair distribution of land, and poverty. Transition to justice means securing access to basic rights and services, such as decent housing, health care, education, sanitation and clean water. This holistic approach is not only about addressing inequality and rights but is necessary for Just Transition to be taken into society.

“If they don’t have food, how can they engage with other things?”

Civil society, South Africa

“Livelihood problems are immediate concerns—any climate solution must also address immediate livelihoods.”

Civil society, Philippines



Social and environmental justice are impossible to separate from each other. In countries with severe unemployment, inequality and high levels of poverty, the climate crisis and social justice have to be addressed together. There is no space to further deplete livelihoods in order to phase out dirty industries. Job losses equate to starvation. Especially as increasing environmental disasters are affecting the poorest first and foremost.

If their immediate basic needs are met (including during climate disaster events), people can make choices for the long-term and for the benefit of future generations. **A Just Transition for the Global South, therefore, becomes the search for social solutions that also benefit the environment.** This means that goals included under a Just Transition might be as broad as basic income grants, sustainable food sovereignty, access to clean water, and decent employment or livelihoods for all.

1.2

Neoliberalism has hijacked the climate response

Instead of a shift to greater equality, however, respondents observed increasing privatisation, especially in the energy sector. They are concerned that business interests and capital are being given even greater control of the global economy, under the excuse of climate action. Rather than promoting justice and equality under a Just Transition, governments seem to be protecting the interests of capital. The climate response is becoming yet another source of enrichment and accumulation of wealth ^{18, 19}.

“Globally we need to mobilise against a huge wave of private and multilateral capital, which is dominating global policy and enforcement, with the goal of privatising energy.”

Workshop

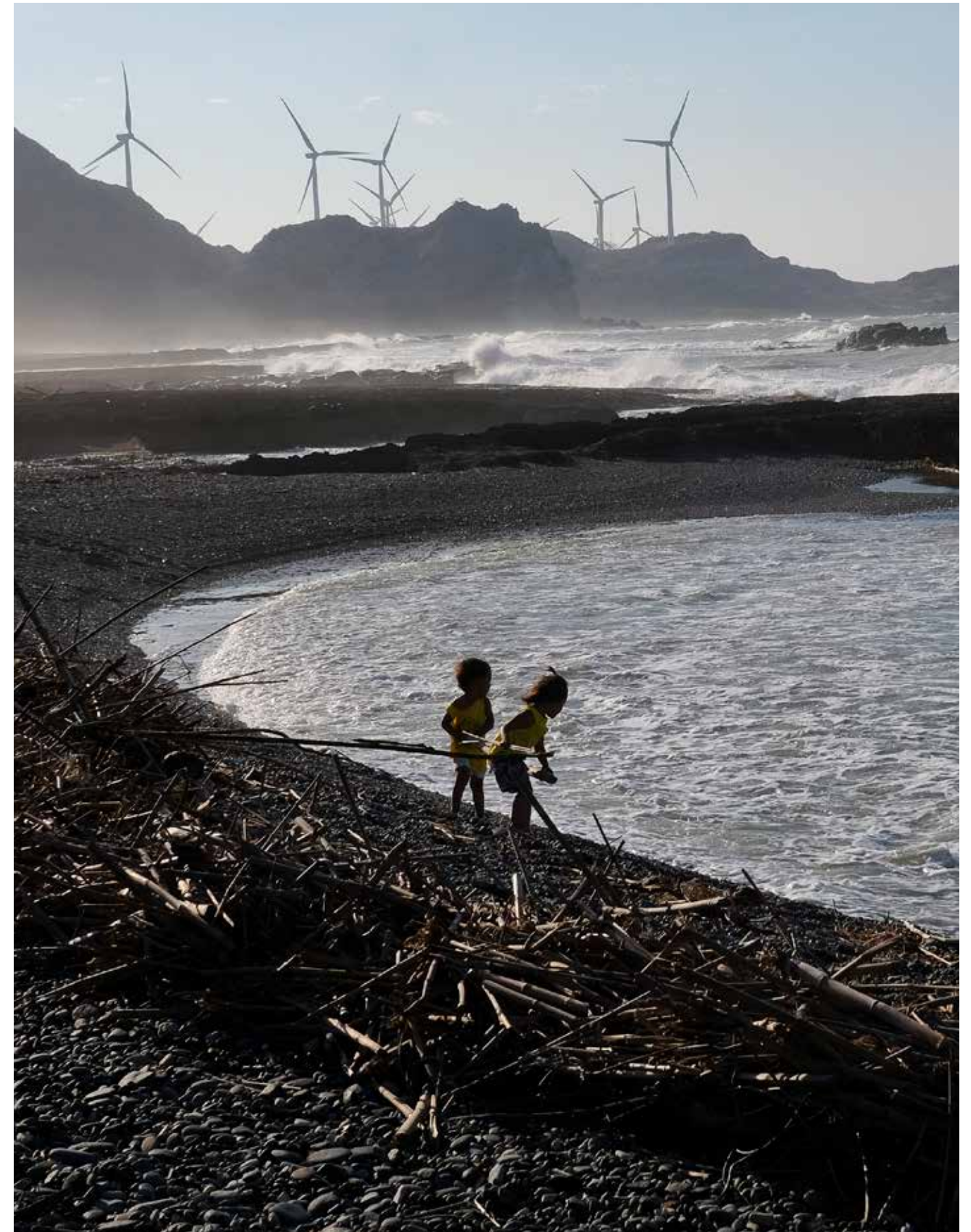
Privatisation and the splitting up of energy services into smaller parts is seen to reduce regulation, decrease the numbers of jobs, threaten union influence, and neglect workers’ rights. There is also a fear that private companies will demand unreasonable profits for essential services and increase costs to users.

“Capitalism as a system does not work. It is unjust and unsustainable—and justice and sustainability are key principles in the environmental justice movements. New forms of energy are going to create a completely different kind of world—but they are not necessarily structured around equality and justice.”

Academia, South Africa

“Without a Just Transition and reclaiming energy as a public good, climate change will become another form of capitalism in which workers are exploited.”²⁰

Respondents were cynical and pessimistic about the potential for a positive contribution from the private sector to economic development. After several decades of neoliberal economic decline and rising inequity, they did not see the focus on partnership between corporations and states as enabling a Just Transition. Instead, public-private partnerships institutionalise corporate power—while social power, through trade unions and civil society, is needed for a Just Transition ²¹.



Privately owned wind farm in Ilocos Norte, Philippines.– © Veejay Villafranca / Greenpeace

1.5

Energy privatisation and the fight for energy democracy

The leading discussion on alternative energy has pushed for so-called Independent Power Producers (IPP). This is being supported in new laws, policies and strategies. The rhetoric has sold the idea that small or national businesses, including community-owned or cooperative ventures, can democratically participate in powering their own cities. In practice, however, many of the IPP opportunities for privatised energy supply have been taken up by global corporations ²¹.

The government-led drive for privatisation in the Philippines has already led to a Chinese multi-national managing the country's energy infrastructure, resulting in massive increases in the costs of electricity. China's State Grid Corporation owns a 40% share in a consortium called the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines, which in 2008 won a 25-year-franchise ^{19, 22}.

“There is an apprehension of Just Transition and renewable energy. There are actors from Japan and Siemens, and the government has no plan to address this. We want to protect the entire industry and engage consumers who are suffering and paying bills; while others push the business-as-usual interest.”

Unionist, Philippines



Solar-powered birthday party in South Africa. Since her community got access to electricity through a government initiative, Quin Lesowale and other single mothers here feel more secure and independent. – © Mujahid Safodien / Greenpeace

Achieving greater social ownership and benefit would need radical transformation towards more participatory forms of energy provision and governance ^{20, 23}. A call to Resist, Reclaim and Restructure for energy democracy asked for: “resisting the agenda of the fossil fuels corporations; reclaiming parts of the energy economy that have been privatised to the public sphere; and restructuring the global energy system to massively scale up renewable energy and other safe low-carbon options” ¹⁸.

“We are number two in Asia after Singapore in electricity cost. If we can show one municipality that they can be self-sufficient with renewable energy, and that they pay less, then this is the sort of patch of green where Just Transition work will get bandwagon support. We have to show how to make your town self-sufficient and not under the mercy of the green owners in the capital.”

Political party, Philippines

Instead of paving the way for private profits, policies and laws for a Just Transition need to create favourable conditions and laws for more national and local participation in energy production and distribution.

“We want to develop ownership by the consumers. Decentralisation would be far more efficient. There are electricity cooperatives, outside Manila, in the provinces. We need capacity building for workers (to work in cooperatives and advocate for energy democracy). We are good fighters and negotiators, but this advocacy is beyond our reach and becomes a political struggle. Congress is attacking us.”

Unionist, Philippines

Worried respondents in both countries encouraged unions, the public and civil society to oppose this take-over of the country's independence. Political leadership in South Africa, however, offered assurances that the government is also committed to democracy and energy autonomy.

“There is quite a bit of debate within the ANC (South Africa's ruling political party) about our energy mix; the role of the national energy producer (Eskom); and the role of the private sector. It's not obvious that the private sector and the market will dominate. There is a recognition that unless we maintain a strong state presence in the energy sector, you are not going to be able to provide energy to poor people.

Since 1994 South Africa has done phenomenally in terms of getting people access to electricity. Electrifying townships and rural areas was probably one of the largest electrification programmes in the world. Only 8% or 9% (of households) do not have access to electricity. Large-scale privatisation is not the way to go. We need to maintain energy security as part of the minimum platform for a decent life.”

Political leader, South Africa

1.4

Green extractivism: Same wolf, different clothing

Exploitation in order to create climate-friendly technology or other green products is no different from any other form of extractivism. It is still rooted in the same colonial idea that the Global South will provide cheap raw materials for the north. ‘Green’ extraction of minerals, such as those used in the batteries of electric cars, uses the same exploitative models as any other industry. Extracting raw materials for alternative ‘green’ technology at the lowest possible cost leads to land-grabbing, poor health and safety, low-paid and dangerous work, precarious jobs, pollution and destruction of local ecosystems—alongside workers’ reliance on these harmful local industries for survival. In some cases, environmental and social injustices in these new, ‘climate-friendly’ industries are even worse than in established industries, since they lack the safeguards of many decades of unionisation, scrutiny, legal disputes and rights activism.

A green transition rooted in the injustices that have created war zones for indigenous, rural or marginalised people for centuries, is no better than colonisation.

“Extracting from the poor to supply the elite with energy at rates that are unaffordable to the poor inflicts a lot of harm on communities which still stand to be sacrificed if they are in a zone where a particular mineral is being mined.”

Civil society, South Africa

“Low-carbon transitions may be paradoxically contributing to environmental destruction, air pollution, contamination of water, and the health risk of cancer and birth defects. They can deepen existing gender inequalities. They depend on the exploitation of children, some of whom are exposed to extreme risks of death and injury while mining for cobalt, drowned in waterlogged pits, or worked to death in the e-waste scrapyards of Ghana. Low carbon transitions are also worsening the subjugation and exploitation of ethnic minorities and refugees. Perversely, in both cases, the dispossessed communities of Congolese cobalt mining and e-waste processing in Ghana come to rely or depend on the very activities that are harming them”²⁰.



Cobalt miners, DRC. Cobalt is essential in the transition to electric vehicles, but the production is often dirty, underpaid and dangerous. – © Afrewatch 2020

“When we talk about transition, we are talking about food sovereignty. The plant-based food that people are eating now is the kind of industry which is now being monopolised by corporations. So that means indigenous people’s lands will be converted to planting crops that will feed into that industry.”

Civil society, Philippines

1.5

The dangers of confronting capital in corrupt systems

Local movements try to protect communities from various extractive industries, including minerals for renewable technology. In both South Africa and the Philippines, those who directly confront capital face extreme and often life-threatening danger, and intimidation is commonplace⁹. In both the Philippines and South Africa activists have been assassinated after confronting corruption-backed corporations, leading political opposition parties that demand greater democracy, or resisting land-grabbing and mining concessions. Activists defending local environmental rights often face the full force of violence and intimidation by local, national and global actors who are benefiting from profits. The courage of those who continue to protest for the rights to environmental, social and economic self-determination is astonishing.

“There are success stories but they are also very bad experiences. We are so proud of one particular example in the southern Philippines, but our politician got killed after an election cycle because of this.”

Political party, Philippines

Even without violence, politicians who try to promote social democracy or similar progressive politics and participation are unlikely to succeed in future elections, because their opponents are likely to be financed by those with commercial interests.



Protest against the terror bill, Philippines. – © Greenpeace / Grace Duran-Cabus

Example: Anti-mining activist lives on the line

In South Africa, around half of the coal mined comes from especially polluting open-pit mines¹⁴. Residents find that while air and water pollution from the mines dramatically harms local subsistence livelihoods and health, most jobs are taken by migrant labourers. Local movements against these mines have faced terrible and murderous resistance.

These local activists have earned profound respect. In one example, activist Mam’Ntshangase gave her life for a coal mining resistance movement²⁴. In another area, the Xolobeni community has held its ground for decades under vicious attack, fighting to prevent sand mining for rare minerals from invading their land and destroying their livelihoods²⁵. There are many cases where people have managed to resist violent, powerful and well-financed forces. Local landholders can have substantial power to resist the exploitation and destruction of their natural resources.

“They have resisted titanium mining for about 20 years. South Africa is all heroes and villains. There are some of the worst people in the world—the most self-involved, egoistical and exploitative; but there are also a lot of people out there who are fantastically brave. In the case of the community of Xolobeni, for example, there have been something like 18 assassinations, and that’s just the ones that everyone knows about. There is a lot of courage. The mining corporations do a lot—there are a lot of threats and a lot of intimidation.”

Civil society, South Africa

1.6

Radicalise Just Transition: Confronting the capitalism spiral

Global injustice and current global economic systems are sides of the same coin. We see the common good concentrated into the hands of an obscenely wealthy elite. This drive to accumulate wealth is at the heart of demands for unlimited growth. It creates a system of productivity for profit, rather than to meet needs. The extremes of capitalism were seen as both the cause of the climate crisis, and the biggest obstacle to Just Transition.

“The root cause [of the climate crisis] is a capitalist economy. It is all about the monetary system with no investment in people and the bottom line of funding economies for the rich by the rich—not structured around meeting people’s needs.”

Civil society, South Africa

“We are the owners of resources that are in the hands of capital.”

Political party, Philippines

Activists, concerned citizens and unions share a vehement concern that restraints and systems are needed to swing back the pendulum of global economic inequity. The current system is designed for the massive accumulation of wealth. Major adjustment of the global economic system is needed. In practice this might include systems to ensure that national and local workers and communities have far more access to the means of production, such as through cooperative, state-led, or municipal ownership or profit-share. It would mean preventing rampant profiteering and incentivising production that meets basic human needs and depends on decent jobs. It would require **fair tax** and prevention of **tax evasion**.

To truly address the root causes of the climate crisis, the transition would have to be radical. It would need to confront, restrain or reinvent the market system that is designed for perpetual growth, and that is built to amass wealth into the hands of the few ²¹.

The case for fair tax

The wealth gap is widening all over the world, with the richest one percent as the big winners. It is estimated that one percent of the current dollar billionaires’ wealth would amount to about USD130 billion a year. This can be compared with the roughly USD160 billion contributed by global development funding each year.

The South African labour-support organisation, Labour Research Service, has outlined the different levels of a Just Transition (picture below) ²⁰.

At the most conservative level, a Just Transition refers to superficial shifts through jobs, training and the continued commodification of nature. For deeper transformation, a Just Transition would need more profound changes in economic and political systems. It needs systems that resolve the conflicts and self-interest of a market-driven economy and dismantle inequalities in society.

Virtually all respondents said that climate justice means urgently restraining the excesses of capitalism. Some called for forms of modern socialism which transfer ownership to workers, cooperatives and the state. Others called for radical innovation to invent blended alternative economic systems, with greater distributive power and less waste. Some respondents suggested that a mixed economy, with controls and space for cooperatives or small operators to participate, might benefit from the drive, power and climate responsibility of the private sector. All agree that we need to see a profound shift in the system that puts pursuit of profit above human and environmental costs.

Status quo approach

CLAIM FOR JOBS: Retraining programmes, pension schemes, compensation of affected workers etc.

NATURE IS SEEN AS A COMMODITY

RELY ON MARKET FORCES

Managerial reform approach

SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND TRIPARTITE NEGOTIATIONS

ACCESS TO ENERGY BUT NOT OWNERSHIP

ENERGY IS STILL A COMMODITY

Structural reform approach

DEMOCRATIC OWNERSHIP

A STEP BEYOND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

NOT ONLY MARKET FORCES

GREEN JOBS AND WELFARE APPROACH

Transformative approach

A CHANGE OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT CREATED THE CLIMATE CRISIS

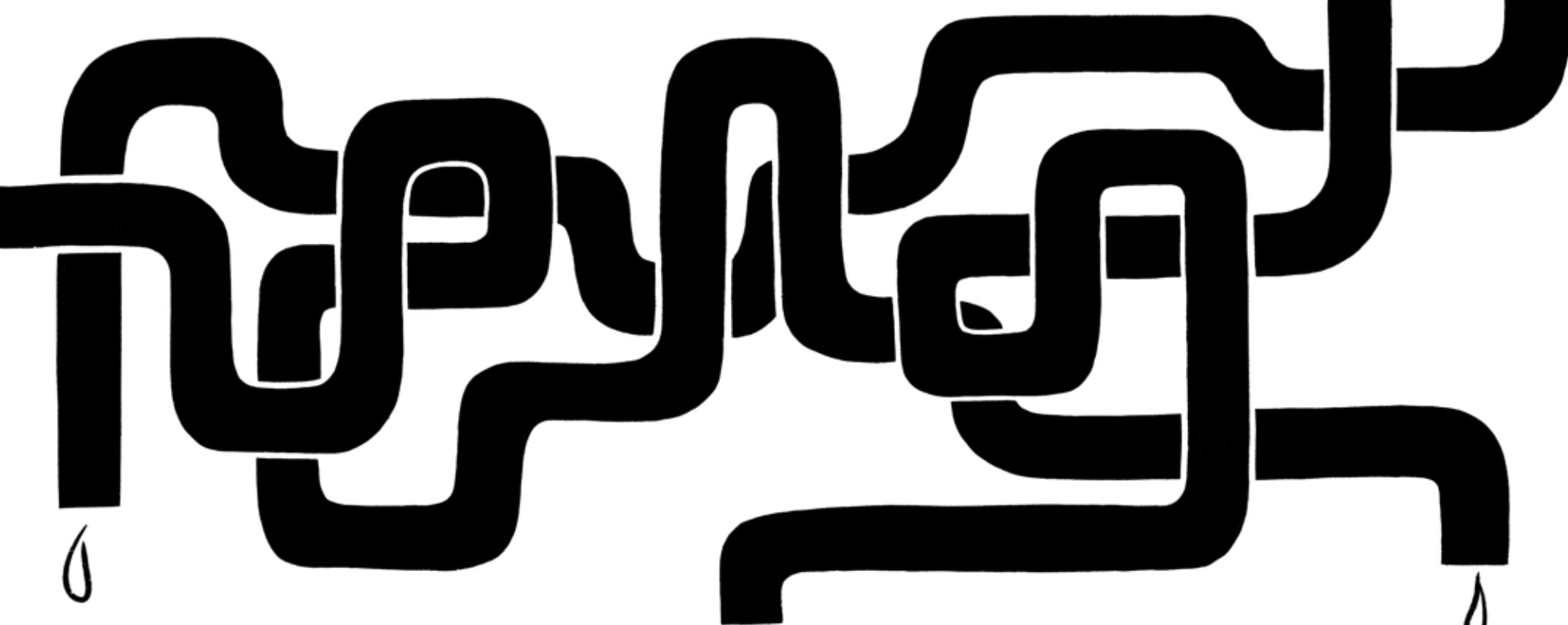
NOT MARKET DRIVEN

DISMANTLING OF INTERLINKED SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

REMOVING GENDER DIVISION

The different levels of a Just Transition

Source: Labour Resource Service ²⁰



DEMOCRATISING
A JUST TRANSITION:
LOCAL MOVEMENTS

A second theme was around communities taking greater control of finding solutions to local challenges and Just Transition opportunities. The discussion dwelt on how people can make decisions about issues that affect them, and how local organising might work.

2.1

When nations don't act, communities do

Almost all of our respondents, from both the Philippines and South Africa, described Just Transition as being about taking local action and building local movements. Although they acknowledged that national economic transformation would be needed to uplift the entire country, there was a lot of mistrust of national governments. People do not believe that their governments can or will do what is needed. Many were disillusioned with corruption, lack of political will or the government's ability to steer an effective and inclusive economy. **This means that while people are asking for radical changes to the global economic system, many of them also suggested working for much more control of local issues by local people.**

“Building relationships and trust is not easy when people have lost all faith in democratic processes and the state. The key principle is shifting the power—decision-making happens with the farmer, the price and the buyer.”

Civil society, South Africa



Indigenous farmers organise a food share in Manila in solidarity with the urban poor during the COVID-19 pandemic. – © Basilio H. Sepe / Greenpeace

“What matters is community-controlled alternatives. The state has not delivered anything—not health, education, or services. Communities are living in squalor. Many are living in 17th century conditions. We see no commitment from the government or business to do anything to rectify this. So we work with communities to try to facilitate processes. We need to empower people on the ground to make the changes, because government and business will not, and have no incentive to.”

Civil society, South Africa

2.2

Eco-socialism: Reclaiming local power

A just society would be one where the majority, rather than an elite few, benefit from the greater good and have influence over decisions that affect them. The people we spoke to believed that working towards Just Transition must include investing in communities—supporting them to handle local environmental and social challenges together, while being capable and active in advocacy.

“The alternative cannot simply be a new energy regime—it has to be a new system of producing and consuming and relating to nature. Eco-socialism is a new kind of socialism that is democratic and ecological. It is based on meeting people’s needs, rather than profit, and relating to nature in a way that natural resources are available to everyone and not just to the privileged few and are treated respectfully.”

Academia, South Africa



Filipino youths painting murals that symbolise their collective aspirations for the future amid worsening climate impacts. – © Reyven Dave Espiritu / Greenpeace

Under the banner of ‘eco-socialism’ or ‘social democracy’, communities and resistance movements have fought to protect their natural environments from corporate takeover for centuries. Opposition to open-pit coal mining in South Africa or the fight for indigenous land rights against commercial land grabbing in the Philippines are just contemporary examples of the battle for sovereignty that goes back to colonisation.

This well-established local culture of action is a key asset for Just Transition. Local movements may encourage their municipalities to design participatory renewable energy systems. They may form green, local cooperatives; take direct action to provide essential services for the community; or work together to protect and use their natural resources. For some, reclaiming local power also involves direct action that may include breaking the law.

“We need a more social form of renewable energy: woman-led and community-led. Systems which do not only look at growth and production as measures of advancement.”

Civil society, South Africa

2.3 Communities taking charge of their own resources

Local level Just Transition depends on an upsurge in cooperation. Finding sustainable solutions to local problems requires that people come together to gather information, and assess their challenges, resources and assets. Communities can then plan development in their area that meets their social and economic needs, while also protecting and restoring the health of their natural heritage.

Local level participatory planning needs to take all the different parts of the social, economic and bio-physical landscape into account. Everything is connected and every part affects the whole. The local context might include, for example, access to energy, land and coastal resource management, the quality of housing, how the risk of disasters is handled, sanitation and food security, along with the vast range of other local concerns.

“We are defending our village and sea against too much extraction from the big shipping companies from other countries. We are protecting indigenous communities and their traditional fishing practices. This is all part of a Just Transition—taking into account the use of land, the management of our coastal areas, and more suitable housing.”

Political party, Philippines

“We started building sustainable social enterprise at community level, and sustainable agriculture for food security.”

Civil society, Philippines

Participatory planning and local management are not easy. There may be many failures for each success. Some of the factors that create success are:

- **Representation**—as many parts of the community should be part of decision-making as possible.
- **Transparency**—decisions and processes need to be openly shared.
- **Trust**—those in the lead need to be trusted and utterly honest.

Communities are not ‘one big happy family’

The concept of ‘community’ is artificial and easily romanticised. Social collectives contain strong personalities, ego and competition. As much as anywhere else, power contests, patriarchy and self-interest play out at a local level.

“We (CSOs) cannot do this alone. We need to work with farmers’ organisations and local government. This is more difficult at the local level, where there are personalities involved—one leader disagrees with another.”

Civil society, Philippines

“The area is very diverse in dynamics between people. It is the home of tribal communities, Muslims, people from other islands.”

Civil society, Philippines

Movements and allies need to be cautious of individuals who might seem to abuse their power, of political parties that might capture their efforts in order to promote themselves, and of people who might be putting personal gain above the needs of their communities.

“The reality is that we have networks of people who favour each other in all communities. Every activity is an opportunity for someone to profit—you must be able to navigate that possibility. It requires a high level of organisation.”

Workshop



Example: “We have to keep power in the communities”

The Environmental Monitoring Group in South Africa supports community projects that meet social needs and benefit the environment at the same time. Some of these integrated community projects are:

- Growing food in backyard gardens
- Helping farmers develop marketplaces for their products
- Supporting local distribution of healthy organic food
- Innovative sanitation that does not rely on public sewage
- Recycling
- Small-scale solar systems.

“Farmers have the power and make the decisions. We have to focus on keeping power in the communities.”

2.4 What about scale?

Our discussions ask for reflection on the challenge of taking many different local efforts to scale. At its most powerful, system change involves change at a large scale, or a major national policy shift or opportunity that benefits everyone. For example, this scale is seen in systems that deliver local services through municipalities or nation-wide services by the private sector. Making these meet society's needs better is the most powerful space for impact at scale. What then, is the role of the ground-up local movements that came up as so necessary in this study?

Small local efforts, even if they are in many different spaces, can easily disappear without impact on society. The problem is that while action needs to happen on the ground, it is seldom possible to repeat a success from one place to another. One size does not fit everyone—and every context is different.

Although this seems to be a stumbling block for local effort—the solution lies in considering what exactly we hope to see in all communities.

Social democracy and eco-socialism approaches do not ask for replication of the actual ideas and solutions found by local people. Quite the opposite. These principles ask that **systems everywhere should enable local people to work on local problems and that local people should be supported to find solutions that work for them.** What should be taken to scale is the principle of local organising to solve local problems—not standardised solutions.



Community witnesses at a public hearing about climate and human rights, Quezon City. – © Roy Lagarde / Greenpeace

“It is difficult to sustain the gains of what is achieved if you only introduce green patches of transition.”

2.5 How to support a local movement

External actors such as unions and CSOs have an important role to play in support of local movements and their leaders and representatives. For example, external allies can help local movements to come together—whether by supporting the costs of meetings or a facilitator, or providing facilitator training. They can enable local leaders to receive training and acquire skills to speak out on behalf of the communities, and to be confident when engaging with government or policy makers. Support for research and information-gathering on local issues would also be helpful—providing evidence for people's demands and helping communities and leaders to become expert activists.

“First get to know the communities: the environmental situation, historical disaster situations and local contexts. It is not just about agricultural production, it is also about the risks to production, such as climate change, exhausted soil and regular typhoons and floods.”

Civil society, Philippines

The key to being an ally to local movements, however, is for outside organisations to be led by local movements, people and leaders. Outsiders cannot to assume that they know local answers, and need to take care not to undermine local and sustainable ways of meeting and working together. Instead they have a role in listening first, and then helping to unblock the challenges that local people themselves identify.



Teachers, students, government workers, farmers, fisherfolk and community members hold a climate forum in Capalonga, Philippines. – © Geric Cruz / Greenpeace

2.6 No democracy without women

Globally, most of the decisions that have edged the world close to climate and ecological breakdown have been made by men. Women, for the most part, have not been at the table. Correcting this lack of democracy needs women's representation in government, unions, business and organisations that influence national policy on Just Transition, including in strongly male-dominated sectors. It also needs all of those involved, whether male or female, to make sure that their decisions benefit everyone.

Women, especially rural and poor women, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the climate and ecological crisis. They are also already impacted by inequality, unemployment and poverty. Working women earn lower wages. Outside of the workplace, their vast unpaid contributions are disregarded and often disrespected²⁰.

“The extractive industry inflicts a lot of harm and violence, on women's bodies specifically. We have a campaign where a woman can be helped, whether it's legal or in other forms, when companies try to grab their land or force them to keep quiet. There is so much risk in our communities—risk to women particularly—and so much repression.”

Civil society, South Africa

Both women and men are conditioned in patriarchal systems. Women themselves often hold back from asserting their rights and find that when they do, their voices are often not heard. By joining forces and working as a collective, people can learn to see how sexism and patriarchy affect society. Many respondents pointed out that Just Transition includes growing awareness and confidence among women, so that they become better able to claim their rights and a fair share of influence.

“Confidence building comes from knowing one's rights, knowing that this is not a state of things that we simply have to accept. But knowing is one thing, taking action against these barriers is another. You also have to push—say ‘No, enough’. A lot of communities (now) know their rights, and have embraced them, and have taken the courage to say, ‘Yes, we will assert our rights’”

Civil society, Philippines

A Just Transition that ensures that the needs of women are being met is far more likely to meet the needs of the great majority.

“Women are especially marginalised. We need to find ways for movements of women to take greater control of their own energy at their own scale.... We focus on mobilising women to be part of a Just Transition where they are excluded from the bigger economy.”

Civil society, South Africa



© Geric Cruz / Greenpeace

Sexism also intersects with all forms of disadvantage. Where poor, indigenous, rural, less formally educated, or queer people are marginalised, the women among them are even more excluded. Exclusion can also happen in mainstream women's movements. Neither men nor women in leadership are immune to prejudice.

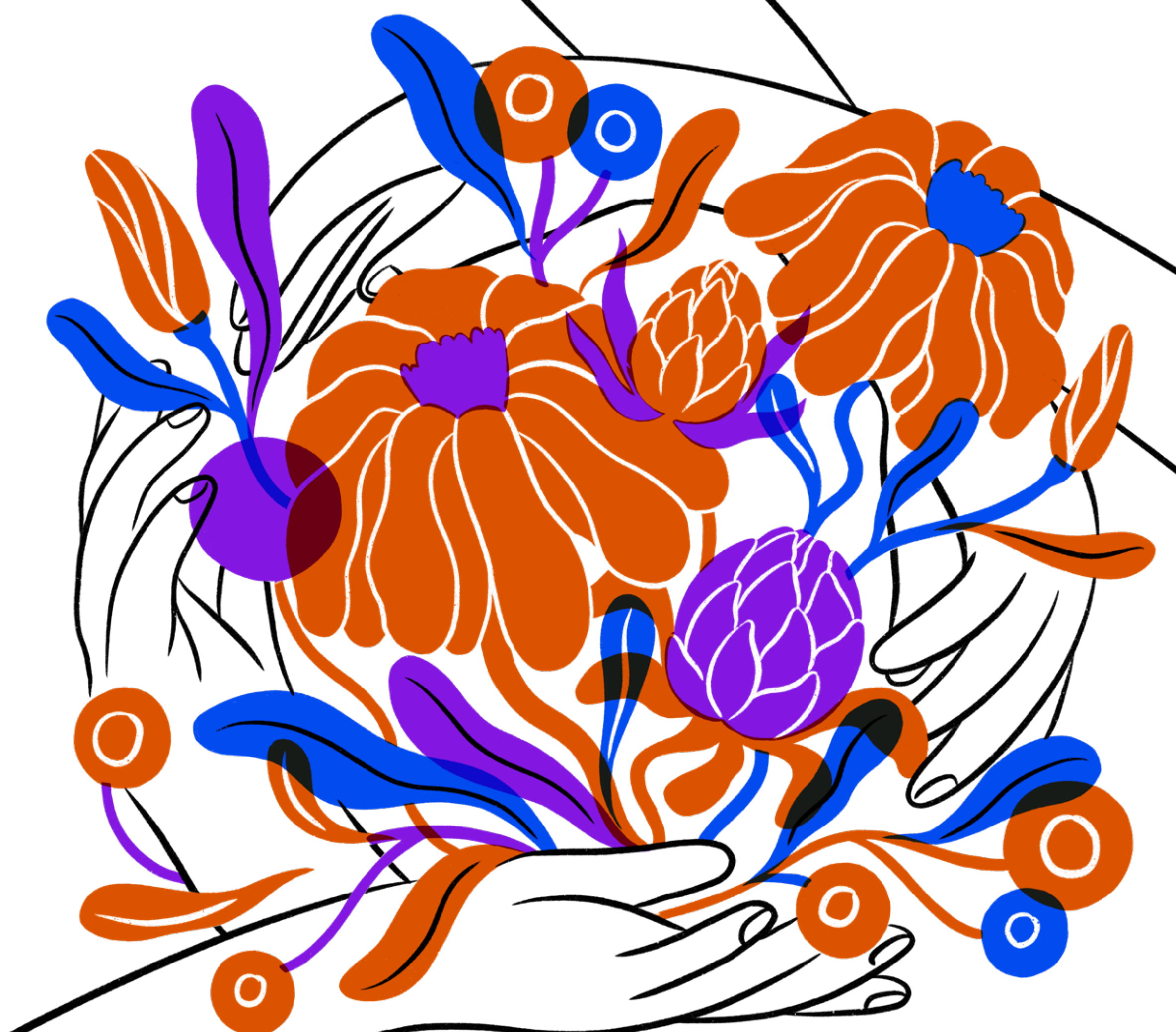
Despite facing sexism in many forms, women often lead community responses and local direct action. Women leaders and feminist collectives are at the centre of many local participatory movements, actions and campaigns. A Just Transition is one which helps women to organise—supporting women to build consciousness, confidence, unity, skills and influence.



Action to stop a new coal plant and protect local water sources, South Africa. – © Shayne Robinson / Greenpeace

“Patriarchy remains institutionalised. Even with the supposedly progressive rules of getting informed consent from indigenous communities before starting mega projects, indigenous women have no say. The companies, and even the commissions of indigenous peoples would say, ‘We're just following customary laws of these communities’—which marginalise women ... Meanwhile, the parallel, vibrant women's movement does not embrace indigenous women's sentiments or agenda.”

Civil society, Philippines



ALLIANCES:
ORGANISING FOR
A JUST TRANSITION

3.1

Broad crises need broad alliances

Both OPIC and SOLIDAR see alliance-building as central to the way social change happens. Today’s challenges are monumental and intertwined. Without a united front across sectors, communities and borders, movements will not be able to achieve the social change we need to see.

The ‘Building Alliances Guidebook’ often used by OPIC and SOLIDAR, defines an alliance as: “A credible group of individuals [or organisations] brought together to accomplish a specific goal or purpose which will benefit all members”²⁶. This broad definition can be applied to almost any group of people working together. It refers as much to the act of cooperating, than to any one type of structure.



Fighting inequality concert in Manila, organised by the Fight Inequality Alliance to highlight the growing gap between rich and poor.– © Jilson Tiu / Greenpeace

“A crucial factor for progressive development is when alliances of citizens are created among a broad range of political collectives such as trade unions, civil society organisations, social movements, protest movements, community-based organisations, interest organisations, religious congregations and political parties... Sustained and potentially long-lasting change happens when broad alliances gather behind political agendas for reform.”²⁷

3.2 Campaigns: The natural habitat of a strong alliance

Alliances need to be formed around a strong and clear common cause. In social movements, this is usually to demand change (or to resist change) for better conditions for the majority, the poor, workers and people who are being affected by social injustices.



Climate justice portraits stand in the way of an oil pipeline.



Fisherfolk Day in Manila. Workers and civil society call for policies to ensure healthy seas, delivering a Roadmap to Recovery for Philippine Oceans. – © Jimmy Domingo / Greenpeace

“Forming coalitions is a regular part of our actions and movements. There are always coalitions—they are issue-based—and they draw in the groups affected by the issue.”

Civil society, Philippines

Example: Coalition on the need for public transport

An example of an issue which led to a coalition and a successful campaign was for greater freedom of mobility during the COVID-19 lockdown in the Philippines. “Even during the eased lockdown, there was no public transport—trains and buses were not allowed. People were required to go back to work, but there was no public transport.”

Civil society, Philippines

Campaigns work best if they have a concrete purpose, a clear demand and are led by a strong alliance. Simply protesting against injustice has less impact than demanding a clear and tangible improvement. A lack of concrete solutions or strategies for major economic reform was seen as one of the weak points in Just Transition advocacy. Respondents in South Africa described how Just Transition campaigns and protests tend to focus on “asserting principles, rather than dealing with concrete realities”.

There are many examples of campaigns by alliances that have shifted the law and have led to issues being addressed, rights being recognised and access to resources and services being improved. In the Philippines, the strategy of forming alliances around campaigns has become refined and efficient and has grown to be part of Filipino organising culture.

Example: Coastal coalition put an end to predatory fishing

In response to over-fishing by big companies that was threatening the livelihoods of local fishers, people in Filipino coastal areas organised and formed an alliance to demand that big companies be prohibited from fishing in their area. “We succeeded—through a huge number of people demanding to stop fishing by big companies.”

Civil society, Philippines

3.3

Turning the Titanic: Advocacy and activism for a Just Transition

Civil society and unions shared stories of both futile attempts at advocating for a Just Transition, and of campaigns that succeeded in changing their local and even national conditions. We noted more optimism among respondents from the Philippines than South Africa. There were more stories of small and large triumphs from the Philippines; while in South Africa the stories were more about sustained and determined resistance to exploitation.

In both countries respondents shared frustration at the difficulties of influencing government. Patience, perseverance and sometimes unimaginable lengths of time are needed to keep pressure on governments and business to shift their positions, and then to implement agreements. Activists expect to persevere, building on small gains until they lead to permanent improvements in people’s lives. They regularly face set-backs, and at times their causes might seem hopeless. They also learn to expend their energy where it has most influence and to try different entry points and strategies. Activism becomes a way of life in a changing world, rather than a goal that is finally achieved.



© Jimmy Domingo / Greenpeace

“In so-called consultations with government, we are politely allowed to speak, and then ignored when policy is formulated, investments agreed and infrastructure planned. These are determined by business interests and capital. Short-term financial gain is the only focus, with disregard for either social or environmental priorities. Their ‘consultations’ are nothing more than rubber stamps. The city plan is driven by business interests. I have no faith in [government’s] social dialogue processes. We need to be very clear where we can have an impact, and where we are wasting our time.”

Civil society, South Africa

“The youth are screaming into a black hole, nobody is listening.”

Civil society, South Africa

“Government is reluctant to engage, and unions are ignored by most of the public sector. Their conferences do not really produce change in policy, so unions tend to put their energies where they have the greatest chance of success—collective bargaining.”

Civil society, International

3.4

Making a difference through policy

Study participants from the Philippines shared several examples of the impact of local, national and global level organising for a Just Transition. In examples that are described elsewhere in this report, they have managed to achieve more democratic representation in local and national planning; negotiated for fairer distribution of public financial assistance for farmers; enabled access to licenses for cooperatives for new, climate-friendly jobs; or ensured the protection of local fisheries. The civil society and labour Just Transition movement was also highly influential in the drafting of the Green Jobs Act.

Advocacy and organising do not end with policy reform. Although good policies and laws are a foundation for change, these policies often fail to translate into real action.

Governments do not always have the resources, the capacity or the political will to implement their decisions. Experience has taught many to be sceptics, doubting that policy, or any government promise, will benefit the majority or the poor.



Johannesburg. Anglo-American, a multinational company based in United Kingdom, advertises how well it treats its employees in South African mines.

“Government may have set up a council to address disasters, but it can be just on paper. We have not yet got to the part of how real the Disaster Risk Reduction Councils are in the communities.”

Civil society, Philippines

“A lot of the policy work is very, very empty and not grounded in people’s needs. I think the policymakers in this country live in a bubble, which is quite unrelated to the material conditions of the black majority. This is why I come back all the time to the affected communities, talking to grassroots people rather than to the remote and privileged elite.”

Academia, South Africa

3.5 Organising for inclusion

Effective alliances need to include as many affected people as possible²⁸. Campaigns are often led by alliances between civil society organisations, unions and political parties. Although alliances and campaigns are stronger if they are clear and somewhat formalised, it is also important that they are welcoming and accessible. In the Philippines, we heard how alliances work hard to include as many different groups as possible—reaching out to women’s groups, migrant groups, farmers or transport cooperatives, indigenous people’s movements, fisherfolk and any other collective. There also needs to be space for informal participants, individuals, local council members, front-line workers, most-affected populations and the urban or rural poor.

“Big demands require a wide range of communities to organise. Without organised communities, we cannot gain support. Without an organised group, we can’t have access to those who are most affected. So organising people on the ground is needed both for development and political outcomes.”

Academia, Philippines

In fluid, local level organising, it is not important whether civil society, unions or any other type of organisation takes the lead. A local collective forms around a champion, leader or group that can inspire participation, can show their ability to work on the issue, and is trusted to speak for the cause.



3.6 Reaching out and reaching up

For advocacy campaigns to influence policy, alliances need to be able to organise firstly with the many different people on the ground, and also upwards into spaces of influence and decision-making.

“We have to mobilise, for example, activists, farmers, the old and young, women, boys, men—so everybody has the energy and understands what we want them to do. But we also meet with local and provincial development counsels, so that we can influence planning. That also lets us ensure that community organisations receive funds from the development budgets in the provinces and have the protection and support of the government.”

Civil society, Philippines



3.7

The strength of unity in diversity

Alliances are naturally diverse. Partners have different strengths and points of influence. They have different networks, different allies, skills and knowledge. Participants might come from local communities or policy-making institutions. They might be directly responsible or directly affected. They might be community leaders, or regional or global influencers. If international allies deeply understand the needs of southern national and local movements, they can intervene more helpfully into spaces of influence. By bringing together their different contributions, members of the alliance become stronger together.



SENTRO manifestation in Manila

Example: Energy union teams up with climate activists to hold emitters accountable

SENTRO is a national union collective in the Philippines which is committed to ‘social movement unionism’ across several affiliated sectoral unions. A coalition between SENTRO and the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice campaigned for Just Transition and climate justice during 2020.

Together with Greenpeace Philippines, SENTRO follows up on decisions filed with the Commission of Human Rights of the Philippines against 47 of the world’s major carbon emitters such as Chevron, Caltex and Shell, demanding that they take responsibility for climate disasters facing the country²⁹.

Example: Union-led research group on a Just Transition

In South Africa between 2010 and 2017, a climate policy reference group was led by the National Labour & Economic Development Institute (Naledi)—the technical arm of the South African national union federation, COSATU. Naledi often works in reference groups that involve unions and civil society. This group’s task was to guide and stimulate research on how production in the country could become less carbon and water intensive, while taking the realities of poverty into account.²⁸

The group’s work resulted in The Climate Policy Framework³⁰ which was adopted by the COSATU Central Committee. The framework outlines a set of principles, such as how capitalism is the driving force of the climate crisis and the importance of access to electricity and proper food security. COSATU is currently in the process of updating this framework, again in consultation with partners.

“I’ve come to realise that this issue is so big that we need to think outside of ourselves as well. I’ve often said to comrades that if we don’t resolve the way in which we engage with communities and civil society, we won’t win. If we’re going to achieve some of the substantial demands of a Just Transition, the way in which workers relate to communities and civil society is going to be very important. That red-green alliance must be strengthened. If we are seeking a serious shift in our industrial policy, we are going to need a strong alliance.”

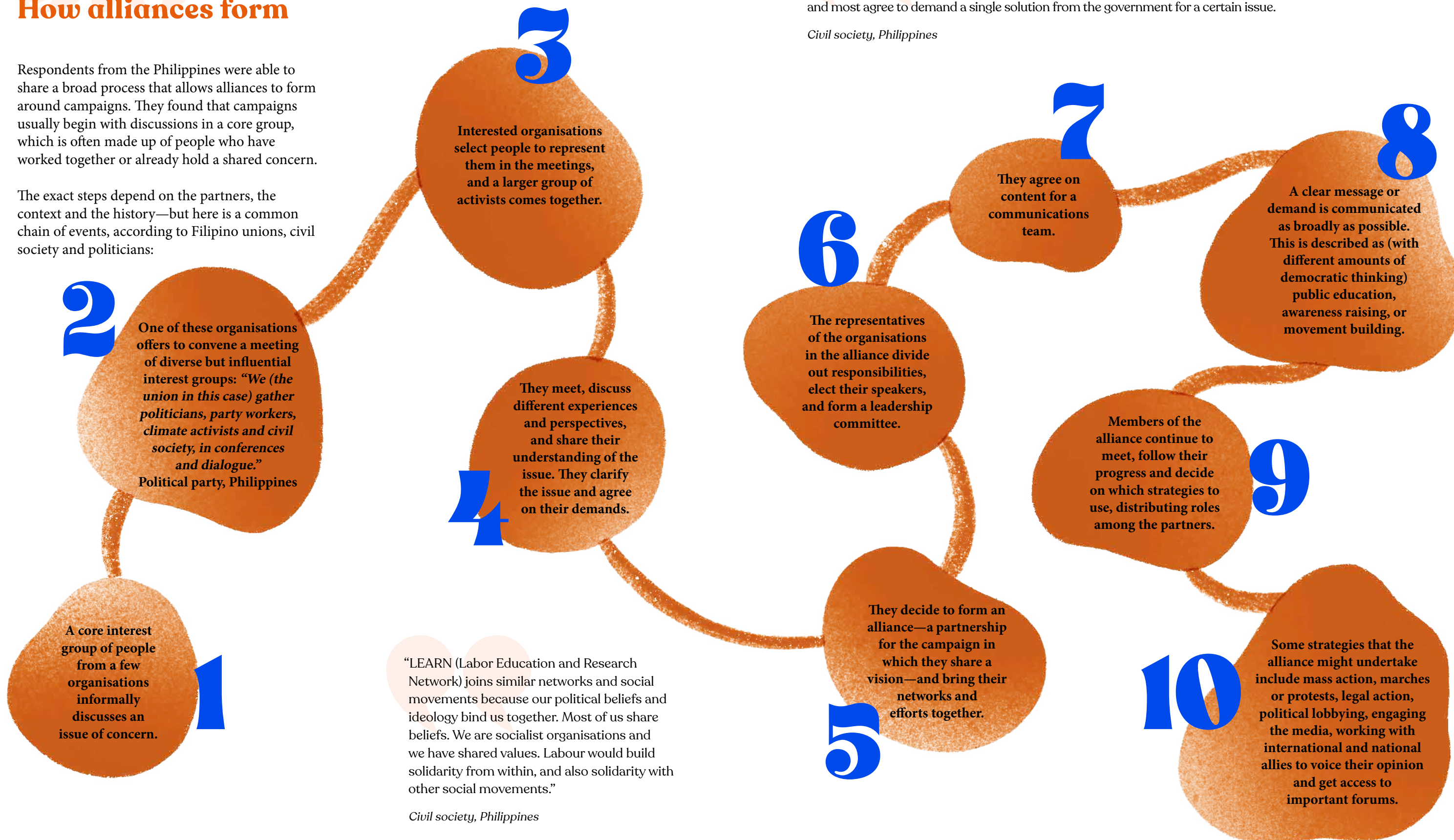
COSATU, South Africa

3.8

How alliances form

Respondents from the Philippines were able to share a broad process that allows alliances to form around campaigns. They found that campaigns usually begin with discussions in a core group, which is often made up of people who have worked together or already hold a shared concern.

The exact steps depend on the partners, the context and the history—but here is a common chain of events, according to Filipino unions, civil society and politicians:



"Alliance-building takes perseverance and patience in diverse cultures. There are many very fragmented organisations. It takes patience for initiators to bring the different people together. There are a lot of people who might want to belong to an alliance but are afraid of weakening their own organisation. It takes time to explain why to build an alliance. Then we identify the issues that affect all the organisations and most agree to demand a single solution from the government for a certain issue.

Civil society, Philippines

"LEARN (Labor Education and Research Network) joins similar networks and social movements because our political beliefs and ideology bind us together. Most of us share beliefs. We are socialist organisations and we have shared values. Labour would build solidarity from within, and also solidarity with other social movements."

Civil society, Philippines

3.9 Movement building for the long term: A critical mass pulling in the same direction

A movement can be described as less focused than an alliance—more of a marathon than a sprint. It is more open to the ebb and flow of participants. Movements gather mass over time and provide fertile ground for alliances and campaigns as critical moments arise.

In the Just Transition movement, diverse organisations are striving to build longer-term relationships and to find common ground and workable solutions to the closely intertwined climate and inequality crises.

“About 17 organisations have come together quite usefully to form a network or platform to look more broadly at the climate justice issue. So they’re not just looking at single issues like energy, but at how climate justice intersects with the land issue, the forest issue, the ‘false solutions to climate change’ issue, Just Transition, the green energy transition within Just Transition, etcetera. We try to link joint struggles across the movements.”

Civil society, South Africa

Although efforts are being made, respondents felt that the movement for a Just Transition in South Africa (and elsewhere) remains weak and fragmented, without a clear shared agenda. Whether at local, regional or global level, this pull in the same direction is very difficult to achieve.



© Francesco Pistilli / Greenpeace

3.10 Disunity, tensions and the difficulties of team work

There are many and deep divisions among those working for a Just Transition. Unions and civil society may have different ideologies. Northern and southern movements may have different priorities. Within civil society, the green movement and the Just Transition movement disagree on the speed and processes for change.

Green civil society from national to global levels, for example, is pushing hard for the rapid closure of coal mines and coal-fired power stations, at any social cost. With slightly different priorities, even though workers and members of labour movements share a commitment to the climate response, they insist that jobs are protected, improved and created in the process.

One of the major disagreements is around civil society’s support of privatised renewable energy. Unions are deeply concerned about the drive for privatised energy, raising the risks of global corporate takeover of national industries, fewer jobs, shrinking labour rights, and escalating inequality as energy prices are increased for maximum profit. The labour movement regards any role for the private sector as being potentially exploitative, whether in energy transition, or any other industry.

“Although we have always worked well with civil society and community organisations, the difference in ideologies plays a huge role in this contested issue of a Just Transition. The trade union organisation heavily believes in socialism—that workers must own the means of production—and believes that the state has a significant role to play, especially when it comes to renewable energy generation. We found a rift with the renewable energy ‘Independent Power Producer programme’. The civil society organisations love it, whereas we felt that privatisation of the renewable energy sector was a problem.”

COSATU, South Africa

“Very few campaign-oriented movements are in a trusted relationship with unions. Unions are not anti-alliance, but the representative democracy underpinning them makes them wary of those who do not have democratic structures. And CSOs are put off from engaging closely with unions because unions think they know the answers—always reducing a relationship to a bargaining relationship.”

Civil society, International

These differences severely obstruct the Just Transition movement and may have left the space open for decisions to be dominated by the all too eager private sector.

Although severe disunity undermines advocacy efforts, some internal conflict can be healthy. With mutual respect, disagreements can put the spotlight on problems that need to be understood and addressed. **Experienced Filipino campaigners said that alliances take time and patience. They find that persistence pays off, and spending time to reach a common agenda among a diverse collection of allies is far more likely to result in success.**

3.11 Reinventing movement-building with Generation Z

Virtually all forms of movement building assume that formal structures—organisations—are the basic unit. We think of alliances in terms of relationships between, for example, unions and civil society organisations. These are legal entities that are created to convene, gather a following or to advocate. They are seen as legitimate representatives of a certain issue or a group of members.

While this arrangement does provide structures around which people can gather, it also comes with limitations. **Formal organisations miss out on some important parts of activists' social networking. They bias participation towards people who can and who want to be part of organisations.** They also reserve leadership for those who wish to build an institution, attract funding and members and maintain their own organisational permanence. These aims are, of course, legitimate and acceptable, and organisations do help to create a dependable institutional fabric. However, there is also space for a more innovative and inclusive way of networking that is in tune with the times.

In the last 20 years, social media has created 'bubbles' around ideas. Exploding into many different online spaces, social media has been very powerful in rapidly building movements, even if participation for many mainly consists of 'liking', 'following' and 'sharing' ideas. If a bubble is large, active and exciting enough, it can rapidly distribute information and influence beliefs. It can reach a wide range of people who then bring their physical presence to events, marches or trainings.



Although social media is not a substitute for face-to-face engagement, and has been accused of disproportionately promoting the views of the far right, it would be difficult to imagine mass movements without social media today. Given its importance, digital organising and access to information is a top priority for the many people in the Global South who have less access to affordable internet.

Of course, social media bubbles are not discerning, and can rapidly share misinformation, while giving people the false impression that their views are shared by society at large. While digital space has clear flaws, social media users have become increasingly savvy, and hopefully less vulnerable to manipulation.

Overall, few could argue with Greta Thunberg's powerful influence over the global climate discourse from the age of 15, which has also translated into a physical movement with millions of participants all over the world—one of the biggest global mobilisations ever.



DECENT JOBS IN A
GREEN ECONOMY



The ILO Just Transition goal calls for “Zero carbon and zero poverty” ⁷

Specifically in the energy sector, where climate scientists tell us that “the only answer, if we want to give the climate a shot at stabilizing, is to get away from fossil fuels entirely and move to 100% renewable energy” ³⁴

A green economy does not necessarily equal a fair economy. Big private corporations may take control of important sectors like energy, on which good jobs and national economies depend. How do we ensure there are enough green jobs? How do we make sure they are secure, decent and unionised? How do we create opportunities in a zero-carbon economy?

4.1 Coal: a love-hate relationship

Since the industrial revolution and the invention of steam power, coal has been a major source of energy—driving industry, supporting jobs, and forming the foundation of many economies. As the impact of hundreds of years of burning fossil fuels reaches crisis point, the end of this era is in sight.

Despite this dependency, coal has always had major drawbacks. Besides being the largest contributor to the climate crisis, the mining and use of coal pollutes air and water, harms surrounding food production and causes multiple health problems ^{33, 36}. The industry also largely excludes women and tends to use migrant workers, rather than employing local people. There are many good reasons that towns may resist open-pit coal mining and coal-fired power plants.

In many communities, however, local jobs are offered, and the need for employment outweighs health and environmental impacts. In these settings, people are struggling for survival and many would rather accept the harms of dirty energy than be denied the jobs that come with it. Even new coal fields in areas of valuable biodiversity and important water sources are faced with this tension.



Pond contaminated by coal mine, Mpumalanga – © Mujahid Safodien / Greenpeace

Example: Community says yes to mining in precious nature area

In the province of Mpumalanga, South Africa, 60% of the area is being mined or has the potential to be mined while also being high quality agricultural land, and a vast underground water source. In one of many examples in the province, the Mabola area faces land-use conflicts over conservation, water management, mining and agricultural use. With its exceptional biodiversity and water value, it was declared a protected area in 2014. In 2018, however, the Ministers of the Environment and Finance overturned that protection and issued a coal mining permit for the area ³⁷, a decision that has since been linked to corruption ³⁸.

This has led to environmental protests because of the impact on water management, the contamination of ground water, threats to endangered species and the climate. Despite these concerns, the surrounding community is strongly in favour of the jobs being promised.

“There is widespread and deeply felt support of the coal mine in the community because people are desperately poor. There are very high rates of child malnutrition; people are living on mielie meal, tea and sugar—and no other resources, and no possible sources of employment. They are largely dependent on social grants. So, here you’ve got a whole lot of crises coming together—the crisis of poverty, the crisis of unemployment and the climate crisis to which South Africa contributes significantly.”

Academia, South Africa

4.2

A world without coal

Countries in the Global South which were once colonised have economies that are built on extracting and providing raw materials to the North. Local systems of migrant labour and the breakdown in community and family systems, the major contribution of mining to jobs and exports, and assumptions of cheap labour drove the colonial empires. These systems are still in place today.

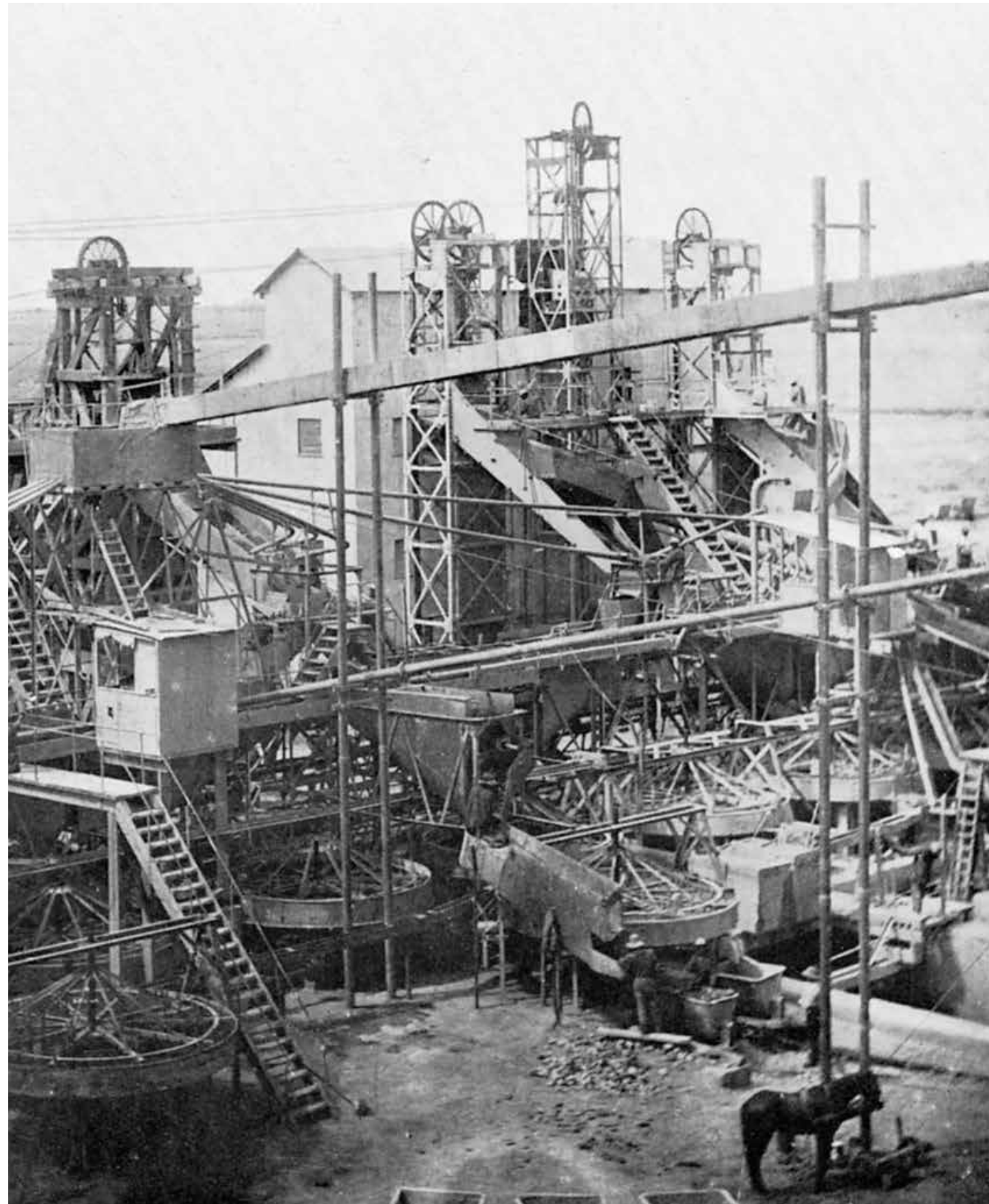
The necessary rapid reduction in carbon emissions has a catastrophic impact on workers and their families in this setting. In South Africa, the coal industry is one of the country's largest employers, and one of the most established industries¹⁴.

Livelihoods are under threat in coal reliant communities. The people we spoke to anticipate that the closure of coal mines and plants will lead to abandoned towns and dissolve local economies. The brunt of this industry shift will be carried by hundreds of thousands of low-skilled workers and their families, and the formal and informal workers that support their needs. They fear that there will be minimal global sharing of this burden.

“The context that raises the biggest warning flags is the mining sector. It is difficult to see a win where the whole community's livelihood currently depends on coal mining or coal power stations. How do you create a patch of green politics for the people who are most faced by the injustice of transitions?”

Political party, Philippines

Although most workers in the coal industry are men, women rely just as much on the local economy, although they are offered poorer quality jobs with a fraction of the income. Being less able to move as migrant workers, women will be deeply impacted as coal towns decline.



Extractive industries were established in South Africa by the colonial governments, and created large profits for the empires.

“Women are very connected to the coal economy. (For example) they might sell food as a small vendor outside a coal mine, a power station or a construction site. They are embedded in that context, while still being completely excluded and poverty stricken.”

Civil society, South Africa

“Labour is saying that we cannot close the coal mines until we have made provision for the 80,000 employed workers (at least 150,000 are employed directly and indirectly in the industry¹⁴). The coal mines cannot be closed until provision has been made for those workers, such as alternative jobs, retrenchments packages or skills training.”

Academia, South Africa

In the Global South, social safety nets that might act as a buffer against economic or environmental disasters are thin at best. Any loss of income rapidly escalates hunger and impacts on all basic rights. Only a transition that effectively addresses these challenges can be accepted, and far more attention and creativity will be needed to achieve this. While keeping pace with a rapid transition, justice for the vast numbers of workers who will be affected must be non-negotiable.

In another interesting sequence of events, coal is not leaving without resistance³⁹. As financial institutions divest from fossil fuels, and large multinational mining corporations withdraw, these businesses are being bought. For example, major global mining corporations are selling their interests to smaller South African companies, which plan to continue operations well into the future⁴⁰. Declining coal demand alongside declining supply may still leave space for smaller investors. This adds a layer of complexity, as official national commitments to reduce emissions clash with the powerful political forces of business owners protecting their investments.

4.3

Employment anxiety in a Just Transition

With its roots in labour and justice movements, the founding principle of Just Transition is for a climate response that is urgent and creative, and which produces an increase in decent and inclusive jobs. At the same time Just Transition must decrease the extreme distortion in the distribution of wealth.

This vision has a hollow ring in countries already battling high unemployment and with a track record of steadily diminishing jobs whenever there are major industry shifts. People fear that changes are likely to lead to lasting destitution and unemployment, certainly at local level. In South Africa, for example, towns which were previously supported by textiles and steel production declined into extreme poverty when these industries were replaced by low cost imports. The shift from rail to road has also resulted in the disintegration of railway towns.

Furthermore, mining and energy are well-established, unionised industries. They offer well-paid, decent jobs following decades of union effort.

In countries where Just Transition is more advanced, decent jobs in new sectors are being generated, and the ILO has shown how there are more and better employment opportunities where a Just Transition is well-managed⁷. This is not necessarily the case where the Just Transition movement is not as strong. In South Africa and the Philippines, for example, the move towards renewable energy, and the splitting of the energy sector into smaller parts, means that many of these established jobs are being replaced by less regulated, more precarious work, with poor health and safety conditions. This also applies in many countries where rare minerals are being mined in severely unregulated settings. These fragmented, small private companies are difficult to unionise, and employers are more difficult to hold to account.

“To move from coal to renewable energy you need minerals. That means more mining of critical minerals, and also much more recovery and recycling of minerals. Right now, the jobs, especially in the recycling and recovery of minerals, are terrible. They are informal, dangerous, and poorly paid. You would want to focus on organising, trying to affect flows of capital around the sector, and getting policy in place in different countries, both in the North and South, in the constant collective fight to make all jobs good.”

Unionist, International

Just Transition processes in some Global North countries have resulted in massive industrial and regional investments, employment opportunities and collective bargaining agreements that secure good new jobs or suitable support and compensation for all workers. The question is whether this scale or level of restructuring is possible in countries like South Africa or the Philippines. Union leaders in South Africa have already warned their members that job losses are inevitable, that change is unavoidable, and that the current industries are environmentally unsustainable. They are not yet able, however, to assure their members working in these industries that they will be protected from unemployment, or that they will have access to social safety nets.



Coal workers, South Africa – © Jan Truter

“There is pressure [on unions] to articulate progressive positions on the issue [of green transition], but I don’t know how to deal with the tension of jobs. I am being told a narrative of change—but I see nothing to show how we can take care of jobs. That for me is the biggest tension.”

Civil society, South Africa

A further major concern is that the mining sector is one of the few which offers good jobs to low-skilled manual workers without tertiary education. These workers, although highly experienced, would have difficulty getting a job in industries that require high levels of technical skill or education, without substantial skills development. Jobs in other low-skilled sectors are of much poorer quality, lower paid, and already in high demand.

With this history, it is understandable if workers and coal-based local communities strongly oppose a transition. They cannot imagine justice, or retraining, or the creation of new jobs.

“Our biggest challenge [as a union federation] has been getting workers to accept that a change is coming. At the end of the day, I don’t think anybody is comfortable with the conversation around the possibility of losing their jobs.”

COSATU, South Africa

“Transitioning to clean, green energy will definitely affect workers—you cannot easily mobilise workers to support Just Transition when they think they might lose their jobs.”

Civil society, Philippines

“Just Transition is not popular in the Philippines. We support the transition to renewable energy, but it must be balanced with workers’ rights.”

Unionist, Philippines

Just Transition as a source of hope in anxious times

The Just Transition dialogue, however, adds new elements to the historic pattern. The global discussion is about sharing responsibility for the impact of the climate crisis and making sure that the burden is fairly distributed. Commitment to a Just Transition might help to prevent history from being repeated.

One of the strongest messages in the Just Transition discussion, and from people in this study, is that for a transition to be just, the global economic model must change. Open globalisation of markets, and pressure to remove subsidies or protections, mean that countries such as South Africa and the Philippines cannot compete as industrial nations. Unless their economies are in some way supported, creating employment and economic recovery becomes unwinnable. While the complex economics of global market forces are well beyond our reach in this study, respondents were clear that **solutions need to create thriving national industries that produce enough decent jobs.**

“We are interested in building up local capacity for a value chain approach towards the renewable energy sector. We are past the point of thinking that you will take a worker from a coal-fired power station and put them on renewable energy power plants. That’s not going to happen. What can happen is local manufacture of components for renewable energy generation. We need to build that capacity locally. We think this is where actual job creation is likely to happen.”

COSATU, South Africa

The tensions between anxiety about job losses and the promises of a Just Transition will need to be seen in practice and will need to be closely monitored as industries close and change. The experiences of affected workers will show whether the transition to a global fossil fuel-free economy does prioritise fairness. Within the Just Transition framework, it will be important to monitor and track the employment status of union members, ex-members and other workers. Unions and labour research agencies have an opportunity to take a lead in collecting and analysing these data and demanding that the promises of a Just Transition are kept.



Wind energy factory in China. Producing components for clean energy locally would be one way of securing green jobs.– © Markel Redondo / Greenpeace

4.5

Green jobs – a drive for decent jobs in greening economies

The term ‘Green Jobs’ has become popular. It is defined by the ILO as: *“decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.”*⁴

The ITUC Just Transition Centre asks that the definition goes further, and that **all jobs and all sectors should be decent and environmentally sustainable**⁵. Green jobs should be no different from any job. Work, production and social responsibility need to be improved throughout society.

Jobs and a Just Transition

The Just Transition vision asks that the impact of job losses and changing industries must be prioritised alongside reduced emissions through new, green and decent jobs and sectors and healthy communities.

“A Just Transition secures the future and livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a low-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers, government and communities. A plan for Just Transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies.”⁴¹

ITUC

The union movement agrees that Just Transition is not only about the profound impact on workers in those industries that needs to be reduced or phased out, but it applies to all sectors, as all jobs must become ‘green’ and decent.

The ILO highlights how there might be significant potential for decent work in new and emerging industries. It calculates that changes in energy production and use to achieve the 2°C Paris climate goal could mean the loss of six million jobs globally, and that 24 million jobs could be gained—but only in a well-planned Just Transition⁴².

The ILO Green Jobs Initiative

The ILO is the only tripartite UN agency, with government, employer and worker representatives. Under its leadership, advocacy has aimed to ensure that a balance is struck between labour interests and private sector return on investment.

The ILO Green Jobs Initiative pilot project in the Philippines has been working to generate decent, greener jobs since 2009, while testing interventions and demonstrating models and best practice⁴³. The Philippines’ national climate strategy and Green Jobs legislation were developed with government agencies, workers and their organisations, and various stakeholders working together⁴⁴, with social partners having considerable input to the national climate response.

ILO respondents described how the Green Jobs Initiative put labour and employment at the centre of policies about environment, climate and sustainable industry. By facilitating constructive dialogue that engaged both workers and employers and enabling an appreciation of the issues by all sides, a constructive and mutually acceptable way forward could be planned.

More decent green jobs or net job losses—which is the Just Transition reality?

There is clear potential for renewable energy to generate significant employment⁴⁵. Research shows that jobs in renewable energy could be more than double the number of jobs in the fossil fuel sectors²⁰. In South Africa and the Philippines, ambitious strategies are being advertised, such as the Philippines Just Transition strategy that is estimated to generate around 350,000 renewable

energy jobs by 2030 if fully implemented. The Filipino strategy suggests that displaced coal power plant workers could be retrained as solar roofing installers or construction workers to retrofit buildings to meet green standards, while coal workers in rural areas may venture into sustainable agriculture and agri-preneurship⁴⁶.

Although job creation estimates might show that there may be many new jobs, information on job quality is often missing.

“Raw jobs numbers don’t tell the whole story—job quality is different between these industries.”

Unionist, International



© Greenpeace / Nicolas Foitu

Respondents were doubtful about whether the jobs would be occasional, temporary, seasonal or above minimum wage. One wonders whether ‘agri-preneurship’ refers to unsupported subsistence farming, or genuine agricultural innovation with formal and quality employment. It would be hugely problematic, not to say impossible, to encourage coal workers who today have formal jobs to go “back to the land” to informal jobs in sectors such as agriculture or afforestation.

Green Jobs through local participatory planning

The work being done in local organising has shown that, with support and investment, there is potential for people to take more control of local industry. In Mindanao in the southern Philippines, for example, community level, resource-based social enterprise has led to the production of organic rice, coffee, chocolate, virgin coconut oil, yakun, roselle wine and various organic vegetables. The initiative came out of a major education campaign on climate risk reduction and adaptation by civil society organisation, SIM-CARRD Inc. Together with local farmers, they analysed options for more climate resilient crops, and provided training and practice in the use of organic fertilisers. The efforts have led to areas gradually adopting ecological agriculture, and to benefits to local economies.

Cooperatives–Worker organising for a Just Transition

Some of the most successful forms of union action and of practical, democratic socialism have been where informal workers have organised themselves into collectives for access to jobs, influence and financing.

Example: Union victories for Just Transition in the Philippines Jeepney phase out

Military jeeps, in service since the 1950s, remain a common form of public transport in the Philippines. Unfortunately, they are fuel-inefficient and contribute to emissions, and the government has declared that they are to be phased out. While this is a good idea in principle, the new laws gave major advantages to investors who have the capital to buy cleaner, modern buses or electric vehicles. Informal owner-drivers or small jeepney fleets would have been excluded.

“Workers initially had no way of affording these new buses to get into the new green job market. ... We are not against modernisation, but the way it is done by the government is not just. It is anti-worker. We have been working for a pro-worker policy during the last two years.”
Unionist, Philippines

The Filipino National Confederation of Transport Workers’ Unions, NCTU, organises transport workers in the informal sector. NTCU led a campaign to negotiate a better deal for the Jeepney sector. They opposed the policy in many consultations and national conferences over two years. Their one-day transport strike in 2017 led to nation-wide consultation. NCTU was able to propose a more equitable and longer transition process.

The terms that were successfully negotiated included:

- A slower phasing out of jeepneys, with an extension from June 2020 to March 2021, and a further grace period for cooperatives to March 2022.

- Although individual ownership of vehicles is no longer allowed, NTCU negotiated for cooperatives to be allowed to purchase licences to operate. This has permitted drivers and owners of the old jeepneys to continue to have ownership in their industry.
- The cost of a licence to own and operate the new buses was 1,000 USD. The NCTU campaign negotiated this down to 400 USD for cooperatives, if they could show financial management capacity.
- Another key achievement was negotiation for government grants or loans to purchase the new vehicles.

“In 2017 only a handful of members formed cooperatives, but in 2018 and 2019 99% formed cooperatives.”
Unionist, Philippines

Sustaining cooperatives is not easy. The previous system of individual ownership gave far more space for participation. Nevertheless, these compromises have been valuable, allowing the livelihoods and the investments of generations of Jeepney drivers to be better protected. The role of unions and allies was key, especially in giving support to advocacy as well as capacity development.

“We have started doing cooperative education with them and helping to apply for registration of cooperatives, so that they can be accredited with the government. It is not an easy process. There are a lot of legal documents. They have to raise money for the initial capital.”
Civil society, Philippines

As with the energy and mining sector, the transport sector tends to be male dominated. More women have supporting

roles than leading roles, and therefore have less influence or voting power. NCTU has raised this concern and has created a women’s committee, both to encourage an increase in female union membership and also to ensure that women’s needs in negotiations and capacity development are considered.

These policy achievements have been valuable. As is often the case, however, implementation has been difficult. Only 1.2 billion PHP out of an agreed 5.5 billion government subsidy has been distributed.

Another loss is that under the new system, cooperatives will supervise drivers who were previously self-employed. Drivers now need to account for their time, measure and claim compensation for kilometres, and pay contributions to cooperatives. Members carry overhead costs which did not previously exist. As shareholders in a cooperative with centralised management, they have less control over business decisions and their profits.



© Claudio Sieber

4.6

Labour movements in emerging 'green' sectors

Wide-ranging new jobs may arise from growing sectors such as **renewable energy, climate-friendly construction, road to rail, electric vehicles, recycling and the retrofitting of buildings**. These new sectors need to become organised and unionised if decent work is to be negotiated, and aligned unions are already working to organise workers in these areas.

There is also a continuing global drive for more gender equality in the workplace, including more and better jobs for women, women's participation in unions and women's rights in these male dominated industries.

Established unions have a role in embracing these changes and ensuring that a Just Transition becomes a reality.



Lumwana, Zambia. Workers build green homes in an initiative supported by the ILO.



GLOBAL
SOLIDARITY FOR A
SOUTHERN
JUST TRANSITION

The concept of Just Transition comes from the labour movement, and trade unions are the primary drivers of, as well as essential actors in, Just Transition—not just in their countries and sectors, but on a global scale. The ILO, for example, gathers allies in government and among global partners to embed Just Transition into all strategies. Global networks of influence are essential to gathering a movement, and in these networks northern partners are critical as allies for justice in the Global South.



ITUC meeting on Just Transition – © Richard Dixon

5.1

Allies and networks for North-South collaboration

The global union movement

The most obvious and active networking spaces for North-South concerns about Just Transition are global union federations, representing hundreds of millions of workers all over the world. The world’s largest union federation, the ITUC, is a central space for international cooperation between trade unions. It campaigns globally for workers’ rights, taking advocacy into major global institutions. In 2016 the ITUC formed the Just Transition Centre, which *“brings together workers and their unions, businesses and governments in social dialogue and stakeholder engagement with communities and civil society to ensure that labour has a seat at the table when planning for a Just Transition to a low-carbon world.”*⁴⁷ The ITUC supports its national trade union affiliates to negotiate for Just Transition in their countries.

Northern labour unions also support comrades in the Global South in pursuing fair transitions. They encourage their governments’ embassies to meet with trade unions in Global South countries to help drive the process of a Just Transition. They ask that their governments attach Just Transition strings to international climate and development finance. The declaration “Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Internationally”, launched at COP 26⁴⁸, was the result of such trade union advocacy. In the declaration, northern governments outline their intentions for a global Just Transition. They commit to protecting southern workers in supply chains as dirty industries are phased out in the North and to ensuring that jobs in emerging sectors are decent. Northern labour unions also form direct partnerships with southern counterparts, financing and supporting local organising efforts.

“European embassies are in all the countries we are hearing from. European embassies, the European Union and the donor community are putting more and more emphasis on the Green Deal. That’s a starting point for a conversation in the way that they understand that the transition must take care also of human development and of social rights.”

Workshop



The COP26 coalition joined unions and civil society behind calls for climate justice. – © Oliver Kornblihtt, Mídia NINJA

Civil society

Major international NGOs are active in the drive for a Just Transition, especially those which support labour or have a lead role in defining a just response to the climate crisis. They use their position, credibility and access to support and influence both northern and southern governments. They are able to create bridges for partners in southern movements. Their appetite to learn from and be guided by southern voices helps to ensure that they are relevant and constructive.

Political parties and governments

Although embassies are designed to link governments internationally, respondents had little experience of them making a constructive contribution to Just Transition so far. Both southern embassies in the Global North and northern embassies in the Global South should be well informed and able to promote a Just Transition agenda for the Global South. Their role should be to communicate and convey concerns, and to inform and pressurise their own and their host governments and policy makers for financing and support for climate justice. Just Transition movements could support embassies to fulfil this role far better.

5.2

Financing Just Transition

Green funding to the private sector and the Global North

Green funding is seen as inaccessible and unaccountable to Just Transition. It seems to go directly to governments and private actors, and not always with conditions that it must be used in ways that follow the principles of a Just Transition. This may even happen under the flag of Just Transition—with corporations, governments, environmental NGOs and multilateral development banks coming up with their own definitions of the term, which may exclude the fundamental role of unions, workers and social dialogue. There is a sense that unions, civil society and the informal sector are being overlooked in favour of states and corporations and, more importantly, that their concerns for justice are being ignored.

Similarly, while the climate emergency is acknowledged as a global crisis, far more is being invested in the Global North than in the South to ensure an effective climate response, as well as safety nets for workers and affected communities. Respondents asked for transparency and advocacy for far more equitable sharing and use of resources for a response to the global climate emergency. Global financing has been committed, but the flows are slow and action is not sufficiently visible or accountable. **Activists tend to accuse their own governments of inaction, without challenging the inertia of global financing.**

“There is a need to balance resources for transition from the North to the South.”

Workshop



Climate finance. – © Richard Dixon, Friends of the Earth Scotland

“In 2009, the world’s richest nations pledged to provide USD100 billion of funding every year by 2020 to help developing countries tackle the climate crisis, but that goal has never been reached. (...) Only USD79.6 billion was made available in 2019, the latest year for which data is available.”⁴⁹

“People only criticise our government. I’ve never once heard them talk about how between 2009 and 2018, 100 billion was pledged—and only 1 billion has materialised to the South.”

Civil society, South Africa

Making sure that global and national financial support reaches southern movements

Unions are especially wary of receiving money from global funding mechanisms. They greatly value their autonomy and are accountable to their members above all. They are reluctant to be contracted into controlling relationships with foreign entities. However, those unions that do choose to mount broader organising or political campaigns may need additional funds, with reasonable and negotiated conditions which support their role.

Small-scale and responsive direct funding for local level participation should be part of a Just Transition, but local actors and civil society have had little or no information about how money from global initiatives like the Green Climate Fund could be accessed. Local level Just Transition partners in civil society greatly appreciated funding received through international agencies such as the Palme Center. Funding and partnership enable them to strengthen their organising at local and national levels.

Northern allies in solidarity have a role in ensuring that funds do reach the Global South and do contribute to a Just Transition. Funding to national governments is critical to support national economies through the crisis. Only governments can design scaled opportunities for people to participate and be supported everywhere. However, national interventions are not the only entry point. For locally designed, led and implemented initiatives to build from the ground up, small and flexible funding is also needed.

Top-down must meet ground-up to achieve a Just Transition that both supports national economies for the benefit of all, and also leads to local benefits and change.



Dye factory, China. The textile industry is a major source of pollution in the Zhejiang Province, that supplies brands such as Levi's and Calvin Klein. – © Lu Guang / Greenpeace

Demanding Just Transition responsibility from international corporations

Employers must take responsibility for their workers and their environmental impacts—not, as has been the norm, ‘privatising the profits and socialising the costs’. Global laws and United Nations conventions that are ratified by countries can create a clear demand for national compliance to standards. Existing legislation outlines environmental and worker standards in the mining industry, for example, and enforcement of these conventions gives unions a platform for globally accepted demands⁵⁰. There are a few concrete legal initiatives to hold corporations accountable.

Progress has been made, for example, towards an international law against **ecocide**, which could send CEOs and board members of corporations guilty of large-scale environmental destruction to trial in the International Criminal Court^{51,52}. Several unions have come out in support of an ecocide law, arguing that the worst forms of exploitation of workers and of nature are often intertwined.

Another initiative to hold big business accountable is the push in the European Union Commission for a law to ensure **human rights and environmental due diligence**⁵³. This would oblige companies to analyse human rights and environmental risks and take action to prevent these risks. Advocacy continues to prevent legal proposals from being diluted in negotiations.

While laudable, these laws cannot be developed only for northern interests. They also need to be negotiated with the southern supply chain. For example, stopping imports of products that are part of a coal-based supply chain would destroy jobs not only in the coal sector but across many industries. Legal details need to be worked out in close consultation with the workers and unions that are most affected in the Global South, to ensure that in practice the laws do achieve the goals of protecting human and environmental rights. For example, where job losses are likely, but there are no workers’ safety nets, legal requirements must include paying for those financial safety nets through the whole supply chain.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we suggest the following measures be taken to effectively work towards Just Transition in the Global South.

1. Global solidarity in advocacy

Act as allies in advocacy

“We need a broader coalition for climate change. The Global South is the victim of something caused by the Global North. Very few in the (southern) social movement understand climate justice contributions by the Global North.”

Unionist, Philippines

Solidarity between North and South is mutual. Respondents cautioned against a polarised North-South division. **Together, northern and southern allies need to explore their experiences and concerns. They need to reflect as a global community, with shared advocacy goals and messages.**

Progressive northern agencies have influence and are in a position to advocate to northern, southern and multi-lateral bodies, including to business and the global green agenda. They need to connect with their southern partners and with other supporting northern agencies to make sure that they are well-informed, have the backing of their partners and are driving for the right demands. This needs a continuous conversation, and the first step in alliances is to nurture a vibrant network and good communication.

Below are some key demands that respondents suggested to their allies in advocacy.

Address carbon inequality through faster transition in the North

While countries in the Global South are committed to reducing their carbon emissions, the Global North has far more impact on climate and a much greater responsibility to reduce

global emissions. Climate impacts are being felt everywhere, but disasters are far more destructive to lives and livelihoods in the more vulnerable Global South—with the vulnerability itself being a result of global inequity.

Northern and southern civil society organisations, unions and social movements joined together in the International COP26 Coalition⁵⁵ demanding that rich countries stop ‘cooking the books’, seeking loopholes to continue polluting, and complacently assuming that they will probably fail to reduce emissions.

Allies in advocacy must continue to demand that northern countries give much more urgency to achieving zero emissions and must challenge the current, critically insufficient targets.

Colonialism and continued distortion in global industries for supply of cheap raw materials laid the foundations of northern wealth. Southern economies are still dependent on these industries for their survival. A global Just Transition means that richer countries must lead the way and rapidly cut their emissions, while supporting a Just Transition in southern countries.

Demand that the emitting North recognises and pays for loss and damage in the South

The nations most responsible for the climate crisis need to compensate the most affected countries, both for developing their economies with far lower emissions than the development of the North produced, and for disaster adaptation to climate crisis events. This begins with **debt cancellation** and continues with financing of the costs of Just Transition. Workers and local or national businesses need the same support and compensation in the South as they expect in the North. The health of southern economies is as important as that of northern economies.

As well as supporting national level Just Transition, international climate funds need to reach organisations and communities on the ground. Global climate funds need to be more flexible, locally relevant and accessible to local communities, organisations and local government.

Northern and southern allies should demand mechanisms and accountability for the transfer of funds and other resources from northern nations to the Global South. These mechanisms for support need to be clearly communicated and well-advertised. Partners and activists have a role in disseminating this information, raising awareness on global responsibility for funding the climate response and helping to make funds for local and national responses understood, accessible, flexible and transparent.



Educate the Global North on southern realities

In parts of the Global North, public finances are sometimes sufficient to inject large amounts of capital and infrastructure into affected communities, to retrain large numbers of workers, or to create new or adapted industries and jobs. At the very least most northern economies, especially in Europe, can provide for the basic needs of good quality education, health care, housing and basic services, and often a welfare system for the unemployed.

In the Global South, the situation is very different. Economies are weakened by centuries of neoliberalism, extractivism and economic distortion. These countries also deal with increasingly severe climate impacts as an additional burden. The tax base is far smaller, and large parts of the workforce are already on the poverty line in the informal sector or unemployed.

We cannot assume that a southern Just Transition can use the northern model. Global policy makers should be much more aware of the impact of context, and the division created under colonialism which persists today. Approaches and support for Just Transitions in different settings need to be worked out in consultation with partners in the country or region.

Confront capitalist co-option of green transitions

Neoliberalism has been boosted, if anything, by the climate response. Privatisation, especially of energy, risks further concentrating wealth and power into the hands of large multinational corporations. Collusion between governments and the private sector continues to focus on profit over fairer distribution or preventing environmental harm.

The grand design of a new world economic order is an ideal and would be essential for a climate response to fully succeed.

Less ambitious goals might be, for example, to curtail (properly tax) profiteering from emerging industries; prevent worker exploitation in renewable extractive (or any) industries; disincentivise the culture of waste, consumption and pollution; and strongly support innovations that reduce emissions while distributing benefits and creating decent work.

The pathway out of the excesses of capitalism needs to be researched and debated. South-North allies from unions and civil society should be playing a much more central role in defining this journey, if the new global economy is to be any different from the old.

Amplify women’s needs and voices, including the most marginalised

Both southern and northern partners for Just Transition must ensure equal representation by women and include and amplify women’s voices in all elements of alliances, movements and advocacy. Space at the table tends to be dominated by the educated, rich, connected and often male. A movement for fair and green change needs to provide dedicated support to women leaders and organisations working for women’s participation and rights.

Demand universal social protection and the right for workers to organise

In these times of great upheaval, Just Transition needs to assure universal social protection for workers and affected communities. The right to decent work remains as important as ever in the move towards renewable energy, climate-friendly transport, construction and agriculture. As many industries shift to reduce emissions, jobs may be lost by some workers and gained by others. **Financial safety nets for all workers and their families are needed**—not only in the Global North, but also in the Global South.

Decent work is strongly linked to unions and organising. Shifts in industries can destabilise existing unions, cause fragmentation, and create workplaces with little or no effective worker

representation. There is an urgent need for northern support for the **rapid unionisation of emerging sectors**, including innovative systems for precarious workers and workers who cannot pay union membership fees. Effective organising and collective bargaining are critical in all sectors, but especially in emerging, dangerous and precarious sectors.

As described in this report, violence and restricted freedom of expression and association are a major obstacle to rights in some southern countries or communities. Unionists, and other activists for workers’ rights, democracy and environmental rights can face extreme danger and persecution, often with the invisible backing of global corporations and corrupt national officials. A Just Transition also means **confronting authoritarianism, corruption and exploitation** wherever they are found, in the North or the South.

2. Create alliances for national Just Transitions

Work together to inform and demand strategies for a Just Transition from government

Continue to form, refine and use alliances between trade unions, political parties, civil society and social movements to influence champions in government. Knowledgeable and representative actors across different types of organisations and industries—from the local to the national level—need to be involved. They need to share information continuously, raise public knowledge and awareness, and reach consensus on the best position for all.

Respondents observed that **concrete demands with clear strategies had more impact than vague demands about principles**. Alliances which give time and energy to formulating demands from many different perspectives are better able to produce clear and powerful demands, and to convince duty-bearers that these demands have wide support.

Once alliances have formed and defined their strategy, they may share out roles in multi-pronged influencing through media, public campaigns,

litigation, participating in formal and informal consultation and direct, personal meetings with advisors and decision-makers.

Political influence needs to be deep enough to go beyond elected politicians. Champions should include technical advisors and permanent staff. Reforms that are at least initiated in policy processes might allow some gains to endure between election cycles.

A lot of the credibility of alliances depends on representation. It might take time and energy for diverse stakeholders to come together, debate different roles, and reach consensus on their purpose. The more representative an alliance can be, the better informed it is of different concerns, and the more thorough its demands can be. Respondents found that this takes patience, but that it is just as useful to work well on small matters, as to issue large, vague demands.



The women's association Kika-GAWA in Eastern Samar, Philippines use ecological farming to provide food for the community in times of disaster. They are building back their village after it was devastated in a typhoon. – © Vincent Go / Greenpeace

Movement building in three steps

Respondents described the importance of networks and movements in support of a cause. These are more open and fluid than an alliance but are fertile ground for alliances to form behind concrete issues. The Labour Research Service ²⁰ suggests approaching advocacy for a Just Transition in unions by:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Developing solidarity networks
- Stimulating social dialogue between workers and employers

As mentioned above, the unions are already part of a well-established global movement, and have a great deal to teach civil society about movement building. The simple but effective cycles used in the union movement apply to other networks, sectors and causes.

Stimulating dialogue between duty-bearers, diverse network members and interested onlookers is needed to build a critical mass of thinking and agreement. Fragmented networks would benefit from being linked together, finding their common ground, and supporting each other towards shared goals.

Innovate for green technology that works in the Global South

Research, test and share appropriate, accessible green innovations. **Simple, cheap, locally manufactured green technology is needed to provide basic services to the poorest and the majority.** Solutions might be in agriculture, sanitation, energy, recycling, construction, food processing, household energy, transport or any basic need or opportunity. Inventive solutions should be locally affordable. They should benefit under-served people, support environmental recovery and should stimulate local economies.

3. Build local agency in Global South communities

Facilitate local social democracy, eco-socialism and Just Transition movements

All actors—North and South, unions or civil society—have a role in supporting local leaders and communities to take up more local power. Communities which come together to make decisions and take action on issues where they have control and ask for relevant and useful support from their partners, can directly improve people's conditions and livelihoods. They are also likely to be more able to protect their environment and manage disasters.

Community action takes time, effort and funding, and often the right blend of local leaders alongside willing, relatively united community members. With local people in the lead, external partners from the North or South can support local level organising, dialogue and planning. It is crucial, however, that local people are involved in requesting and designing this support.

Assistance might help to develop the skills of local champions, structures or facilitators.

External facilitators might help local groups to work out their own plans, and support the implementation of these plans through mentorship, funding and skills development. They could finance local staff or organisations to lead and coordinate local level initiatives that are part of a Just Transition. Once a local plan is formed, implementing that plan may take financial or technical input.

Funders need to find better ways of distributing the funds for a Just Transition so that local communities and organisations can begin to access them. Small grants might be needed to enable trial and error for the implementation of local plans and ideas. Funders would need to be flexible, with an appetite for risk, innovation, and long-term relationships. Too much money or a long list of conditions can ruin a community, destroy an organisation, and hamper organic movement-building.

Taking the local to global: Support multiple local Just Green Centres

Isolated local intervention, or scattered communities that are beginning to manage their own socio-ecosystems are not likely to add up to a change on a large scale. To become the seeds of a ground-up movement, they need to begin to link together, or overlap with each other, or share ideas across communities, or influence the national approach.

A local Just Green Centre can be defined as a geographic area in which people have managed to find locally relevant, possibly transferable, solutions for a local level Just Transition. Local successes or good practice examples should be documented for feasibility, context and enabling factors—but documenting is the smallest step. Local learning and sharing of practices are more likely to be spread through peer-to-peer experiences, learning exchanges between local practitioners, or the support to these Just Green Centres to become learning and innovation hubs.

4. Expand the reach of trade unionism

More inclusive union organising, mobilising and alliance building

Respondents agree that strong and independent trade unions contribute to decreased inequality and more democratic societies. In a world where climate action will bring rapid change to most sectors and most jobs, trade unions will need to find new ways of organising workers, structuring themselves and engaging with other movements. This is also critical to enable more workers to join trade unions.

Suggested actions for trade unions are to **prioritise organising marginalised workers such as women, youth, and racialised people, and to form alliances with other movements such as community organisations.** Many unions are already acting on all these points and it will be important to learn from their experiences.

It will also be essential for the trade union movement and its allies to expand efforts to organise informal workers; ensure rights, decent work and social protection for all; and formalise informal jobs. As workers are laid off from major traditional industries and jobs increase in new industries, unions have a role in tracking the wellbeing and employment of workers between workplaces and even sectors to monitor whether the promises of a Just Transition are being kept. These efforts are more necessary than ever in the wake of the economic and employment crises caused by the pandemic.

“A broader campaign to include communities and women will get more support than only focusing on workers.” ²⁰

Students from Madiba a Toloane high school in South Africa demonstrate how to use solar cookers. – © Shayne Robinson / Greenpeace



Support worker organising in new green sectors

While all jobs should be decent, unions need to expand existing organising structures to cover workers in ‘new’ sectors, where rapidly expanding industries have weak regulation or oversight. This is certainly the case in new ‘green’ sectors, from software and batteries to recovery, recycling and reuse of materials. New jobs are on the increase, but there is a risk that they will lack the most basic elements of decent work, like health and safety regulations and workers’ rights. These sectors need to become more accountable to working conditions and workers’ rights, as well as environmental health and impacts.

5. Develop capacity for Just Transition

Train for Just Transition

People need brief, basic and clear information about the climate and ecological crisis, and the realities of a global move away from fossil fuels—within the principles and practice of a Just Transition. Training content needs to be locally relevant and linked with the experiences and knowledge of participants. **Abstract information on the climate crisis is far less engaging and useful than information on new jobs and trade unionism, new forms of livelihoods, practices in social democracy and community leadership.**

There is little value for the Global South in talking about the northern or theoretical concepts of Just Transition. Over-simplified solutions do not work in different contexts. Good ideas in northern countries cannot be assumed to work everywhere. Southern homegrown solutions are needed. Solutions must work in a context where governments do not have the finance, the will or the level of industry to retrain or redeploy workers. A realistic and action-oriented approach to Just Transition must be relevant where many are already unemployed and living on the breadline.

Labour movement research shows that the most trusted messengers for trade unionists are other trade unionists. Bringing together unions that are

already working on Just Transition with those that are just starting for peer-to-peer exchange and mutual learning is effective and can be expanded. Similarly, training for workers and unions should focus on the potential for good new jobs with good skills transfer and what needs to happen to make those jobs a reality. Training on getting Just Transition into effective collective bargaining and tripartite social dialogue is also useful.

Training provided in the global labour movement by organisations such as IFWEA and the ITUC’s Just Transition Centre were mentioned as having been valuable and well-structured.

Provide accessible information and materials

Northern supporters and southern practitioners should work together to develop messaging that is relevant to different contexts and audiences. Multiple media from visual print formats, to short videos and face-to-face communication are all part of broad and accessible communication.



The LIVErery in Eastern Visayas. A human library where storytellers and experts share their knowledge and experiences on themes of loss, hope and justice related to the climate crisis. – © Noel Guevara / Greenpeace

“People don’t read. They read the little pamphlets—two, three pages—but are hungry for information. People are much more likely to be moved by other sorts of media than print media. People prefer concrete examples of agro-ecology, renewable energy and shared collective work that addresses their immediate material needs.”

Academic, South Africa

Support local facilitators

Facilitators, educators and trainers from local organisations and unions need access to content and the opportunity to strengthen their skills. Although the themes should be defined by local people in line with their needs and interests, some possibilities include training and communication skills; organising and collective bargaining techniques; facilitating discussion and community dialogue; alliance-building; local level planning and strategic decision-making. Training of leaders should enable them to hold highly participatory and action-learning styles

of engagement—so that community members become better able to facilitate a cycle of planning, trial and error, reflection, and replanning.

It takes skilled people to build movements. Cultivating an experienced community of trainers and practitioners would be a valuable asset in the work for Just Transition.

Learn through dialogue and exchange

Peer-exchanges are effective and popular as a learning space. People working for Just Transition in different ways want the opportunity to exchange information with each other. Civil society, unions, politicians, community activists and concerned members of the public have perspectives and experiences to share within their movements and across movements. Sometimes they are in ideological opposition, but if the exchange is well-facilitated there are good opportunities to reflect and learn.

“Exchange workshops are a new kind of research, which is not extractivist—not just extracting information from people—but is actually empowering them through a process of shared learning.”

Academic, South Africa

This study, for example, points to clear differences in approach between the Philippines and South Africa. **International exchange across countries in the Global South offers learning from practice which is likely to be more relevant and rooted in actual practice, than theoretical or northern learning opportunities.** North-South learning exchanges would also be valuable.

Trainers, facilitators and partners are encouraged to step out of their comfort zones—to leave board rooms, conference centres and zoom-rooms. Partners should visit and take training and learning exchange into coal-dependent, climate-affected or vulnerable communities. By spending time with local leaders and movements in their own contexts, all actors gain a deeper understanding of realities on the ground, which will help them to build partnerships and to act in solidarity.

Conclusion

Movements, cooperation and alliances are behind most human endeavour. By thinking through a lens of movement building, this study has presented us with a vast and varied range of views and perspectives on complex issues.

The study has taken us from the daunting notion that an entirely different global economy is essential to addressing the climate and ecological crisis, through to the specifics of how civil society, unions and activists might engage at local levels with different problems. It is rooted very strongly in the voices and experiences of those who participated. Views range from the conceptual and ideological through to the urgent and practical. A collective of Global South and North thinkers have shared a holistic overview of some of the dimensions to a Just Transition. This does not mean that even a fraction of the ground has been covered. Raising as many questions as it gives answers, this study might be seen as a brief movement within many longer movements.

We would hope that the study might help to connect the already strong and very well-formed views of the crisis of global capitalism, with the need for giving space and energy to local initiatives to respond from the ground up.

It might encourage supporting trade union movements to engage with the societies they are part of and the wider communities around them, building solidarity for and around workers in this difficult time of great opportunity. It might open civil society to the complexity of the space in which people make choices and decisions.

A Just Transition offers a rallying point, through which we could bring together the many voices that need to be heard and represented if we want to demand social, economic and environmental justice.



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Resources

Read more about Just Transition on Palme Resource Center, where you will find films with some of the people interviewed in this study, as well as other materials.
www.palmecenter.se/resourcecenter/just-transition

Find SOLIDAR’s materials and events on Just Transition here:
<https://www.solidar.org/en/pillars/delivering-a-just-transition>



Youth and local community members in Leyte, Philippines—ground zero for super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan)—form the symbol for typhoons that turns into a sun symbol through the use of umbrellas. The visual message is a call for world leaders to ensure that impacted communities receive climate justice. – © Roy Lagarde / Greenpeace



Our future is shared and we must shape it together

The ongoing environmental and climate breakdown threatens our existence and all future development. We must all work together to enter a safer path for humanity.

The urgent transformation of our economies that is now necessary must also be just. This is what we call a Just Transition—addressing the intertwined crises of inequality and planetary destruction at the same time. Just Transition is a call to action, urging civil society, trade unions and progressive political parties to unite in the fight for people and planet.

This study looks at what is needed to achieve a Just Transition for countries in the Global South. It collects insights from people actively working for this fair green shift, focussing on the Philippines and South Africa. What works? What are the challenges? How can this movement be strengthened, and how can international cooperation contribute to that?

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