



G7/G20  
**TRACK 2**  
DIALOGUE



Policy Brief

# Implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership in South Africa

Lessons Learnt for Civil Society Organisations

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South Africa solar power station which feeds into national grid

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## CHAPTER 1

# Background

## 1 Introduction to Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP)

## 2 The case of South Africa



South Africa

## 1

## Introduction to Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP)

The South African JETP was announced during the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26). It is a long-term partnership between the governments of South Africa, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, along with the European Union (EU), to support South Africa's decarbonisation efforts. If it is well designed and implemented it could become a new model for international cooperation around climate action based on national platforms (Hadley et al., 2022).

Building on the South African JETP, future JETPs with other countries are being developed. These include India, Indonesia, Senegal, and Vietnam, as announced in the G7's Chair Summary on Climate Neutrality (G7, 2022a). While all G7 countries will participate in the negotiations for all of these partnerships, in the case of each prospective partnership they have identified two countries that will take the lead (see figure below). Further, the launch of a collective initiative to design new JETPs in Africa was also announced at the EU–Africa summit in February (EU, 2022). The countries suggested for JETPs as part of the Africa–EU Green Energy Initiative, in addition to Senegal, are Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Morocco, according to an announcement by the French presidency of the EU (French Presidential Office, 2022).

So far, however, the concept of JETPs remains rather vague. Concepts for ambitious and coherent cooperation between countries to keep warming below the 1.5-degree threshold have been developed by various actors since the signing of the Paris Agreement. One of the threads common to these ideas is that these partnerships would have to be based on mutual trust, longer-term commitments, and deeper involvement from civil society actors (see for example, (Weischer et al., 2021).



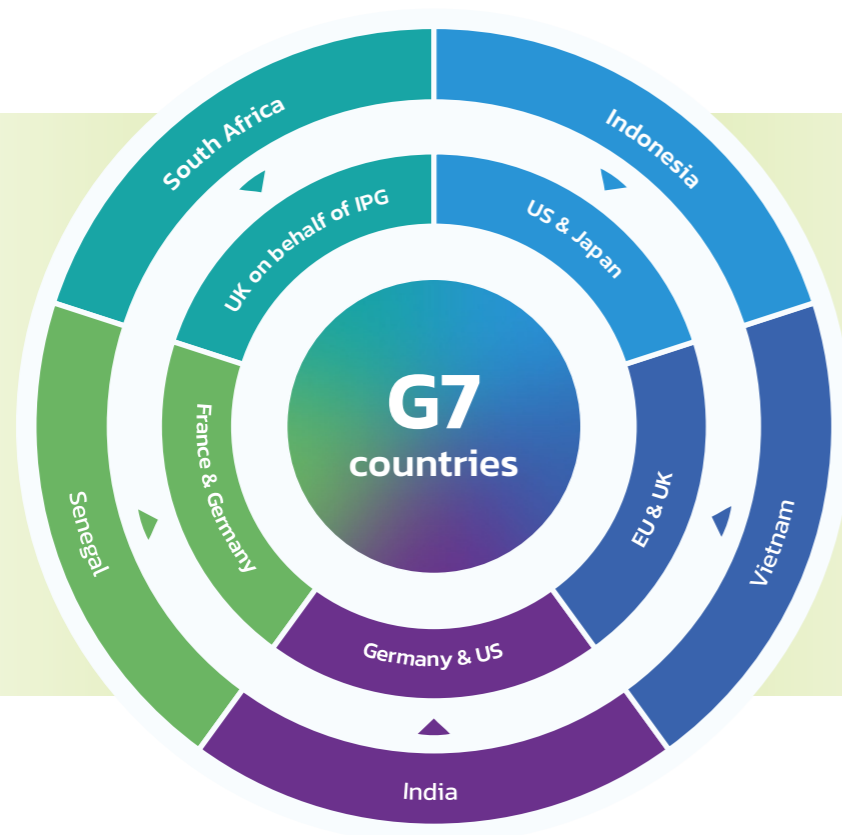
Solar panels on rooftop or terrace of building in Cape Town, South Africa.

The respective presidencies of COP26 and G7 2021 (United Kingdom), G7 2022 (Germany), and the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2022 (France), have all published summary documents on JETPs that stress their determination to work closely together to maintain strong political momentum in these processes to bring on board all relevant partners and with a view to making as much progress as possible by COP27 (COP26, 2022; French Presidential Office, 2022; G7, 2021, 2022b).

**Also emerging from these documents are some shared principles for JETPs (G7, 2022a):**

- Promote national ownership and commitment from partner countries
- Accelerate financial and technical resources through appropriate instruments including concessional loans, guarantees, and grants to reduce the cost of the energy transition for populations and modernise power grids
- Build on a pragmatic, nationally owned, and solutions-oriented dialogue, based on data-led country-by-country assessments, in partnership with relevant institutions
- Focus more widely on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, based on access to energy and job opportunities (including for youth and women), and on attracting new industries and incubators for innovation

Figure 1:  
JETP country structure



IPG = International Partners Group  
Source: Own illustration based on G7, 2022b

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## The case of South Africa

**South Africa is the world's seventh-largest coal producer and provides many jobs in the coal industry. It has the most coal-intensive economy of the G20, making it the world's most carbon-intensive electricity producer. A total of 125,000 people are directly employed in the coal value chain (Climate Transparency, 2021). However, South Africa's high-carbon energy system is failing to meet its energy demand.**

Eskom, South Africa's public electricity utility company, is in a debt crisis and requires regular bailouts. In addition, it is unable to generate enough electricity to meet the demand. As a result, it has been using load shedding (rolling blackouts) to avoid the collapse of the grid. At the same time, South Africa is grappling with enormous socio-economic challenges including mass unemployment (G7, 2021; Mills, 2022; Stoddard, 2021). However, an ambitious build-out of renewable infrastructure, together with retrofitting of buildings, could create 50,000 jobs a year over the next decade in the construction, operation, and maintenance of wind and solar plants, while simultaneously reducing South Africa's carbon emissions. Currently, Eskom generates 95% of South Africa's electricity. Eskom is 100% owned by the South African government and could be the most important implementing institution for South Africa's just energy transition (Blended Finance Taskforce, n.d.).

The JETP aims to accelerate the decarbonisation of South Africa's economy, with a focus on the electricity system, and seeks to help South Africa achieve the emissions goals set out in its Nationally Determined Contribution (Gompertz, 2022). It is expected to help steer South Africa away from fossil fuels and prevent up to 1–1.5 gigatonnes of emissions over the next 20 years (Spinant & McPhie, 2021).

The South African JETP recognises that actions to decarbonise the South African electricity sector need to support just transition interventions, including equitable and inclusive transitions for workers and vulnerable communities. Many people in South Africa's Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo provinces rely on the coal sector for their livelihoods. Investing in the transition to a decarbonised energy system must include a focus on projects that rehabilitate local areas to guarantee liveable conditions and to support existing community-based

economic activities. This investment is intended to unlock new jobs and provide investment opportunities based on local needs, skills, and resources, especially in frontline regions such as Mpumalanga (Blended Finance Taskforce, n.d.). More generally, a just energy transition for South Africa must ensure that the transition to a decarbonised economy is conducted in a way that serves to address present and historical inequality, creates jobs, relieves poverty, enables resilience to climate impacts and energy instability, provides access to affordable electricity, and leaves no one behind.

If South Africa's JETP is successful, it could provide a basis for similar approaches in other developing countries and middle-income economies. However, failure would send the opposite message. While the details of the commitments are still being discussed, there are, for instance, concerns about whether the partnership matches the unique needs and challenges in South Africa (Blended Finance Taskforce, n.d.). These have to be adequately addressed.

**MOREOVER, INSUFFICIENT COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT, AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OR COORDINATION, WOULD LEAVE THE JETP AT SIGNIFICANT RISK OF LACKING SUPPORT, LEGITIMACY, AND ULTIMATELY EFFECTIVENESS. BUT PROGRESS IN SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS COULD UNLOCK A JUST COAL-TO-CLEAN TRANSITION MODEL FOR THE WORLD (GOMPERTZ, 2022).**

## CHAPTER 2

# State of play of the South African JETP

## 1 Structure and development of the South African JETP

## 2 The role of civil society in the South African JETP

## 3 Lessons relevant to other countries and the G7/G20 context

## 1

### Structure and development of the South African JETP

#### Governance structure (COP26, 2022)

A secretariat for the JETP has been established to provide technical and coordination support to the partnership, in a neutral and objective manner. The secretariat is a joint initiative of the South African government and the donors in the International Partners Group (IPG). The secretariat is advised by think tanks.

The international partners (the EU, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States) coordinate their participation in the JETP through the IPG.

On the South African side, in February 2022 the President of South Africa established the Presidential Climate Finance Task Team (PCFTT): its role is explicitly focused on the partnership, and it serves as the counterpart for the IPG. The PCFTT reports to an Inter-Ministerial Committee that is chaired by the President. Its mandate is to engage with the IPG with a view to advising Cabinet on the composition and affordability of the financing package and on its alignment with the South African regulatory environment; coordinate relevant government departments, development finance institutions, and the private sector; and oversee the development of relevant financing mechanisms and facilities to enable the flow of international climate finance to support South Africa's just transition in the electricity, electric vehicles, and green hydrogen sectors.

The PCFTT is also supposed to coordinate the mobilisation of funds, including the \$8.5 billion pledged at COP26 (South African Presidential Office, 2022).



Aerial photo of solar panels on a rooftop, Cape Town, South Africa.

Communication from the PCFTT indicates that it has asked the international partners to submit financial offers for technical evaluation. The technical evaluation of the financial offers includes partners in the National Treasury Department, and consultants. However, at this stage of negotiations, those conducting the evaluation process are keeping the JETP discussions confidential. This is hindering civil society's understanding of the discussions and makes it difficult for civil society to provide input. This risks creating JETP instruments that are not aligned with societal needs.



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Aerial view of Cape Town, South Africa.

In addition to the newly installed PCFTT, there are already existing relevant structures within the government of South Africa, such as the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC). The PCC is a multi-stakeholder body established by the President to advise on the country's climate change response and pathways to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society. It also facilitates dialogue between social partners including civil society and communities.

In 2021, the PCC commissioned several studies and undertook public consultations to help inform the development of the Just Transition Framework and to unpack some of the issues and the context for the development of a framework that is practical, timely, and actionable, and meets the needs of all social partners. In addition, in July 2021, the PCC hosted a high-level discussion on South Africa's just energy transition, with a focus on socio-economic impacts, technology choices, and options for financing the transition. Speakers included the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry, and the Environment, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, the Minister of Finance, and the CEOs of Eskom and Anglo American, among others.

The PCC produced the Just Transition Framework for South Africa's Cabinet approval in early 2022. The framework has since been published. The Just Transition Framework is a strategic plan for achieving a just and equitable transition to net-zero carbon emissions in South Africa by 2050. It will also guide the approach to the implementation of the JETP, with the supposed involvement of actors and stakeholders from different backgrounds (PCC, 2022). The Just Transition Framework will also provide the necessary foundation to guide other planning and policy-setting processes in South Africa (PCC, n.d.).

**THE PCFTT AND THE IPG HAVE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A CROSS-CUTTING FINANCE WORKING GROUP, AN IMPLEMENTATION WORKING GROUP, AND THREE WORKING GROUPS ADDRESSING THE POWER SECTOR, GREEN HYDROGEN, AND THE TRANSPORT SECTOR. THESE WILL BE THE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH KEY TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE CAN BE MOBILISED TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JETP INVESTMENT PACKAGE (JETP-IP).**

However, at this stage, there is no civil society representation in these groups and there is some concern about transparency. Just transition and environmental considerations will have to be incorporated into each working group.

Figure 2:  
Governance structure in connection with the South African JETP

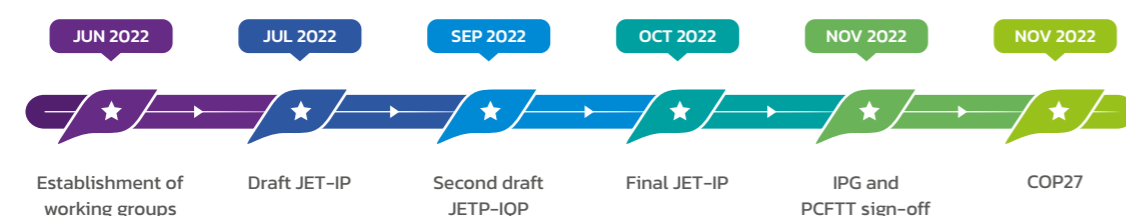


Source: Own research

## Policy developments

Since the announcement of the partnership, there has been progress in instituting legislative and regulatory frameworks that will guide its implementation. An updated Climate Change Bill was tabled in the South African parliament in early 2022. In addition, draft legislation has been published that proposes significant changes in the regulation of the electricity sector, including the establishment of a competitive electricity market alongside the restructuring of Eskom (COP26, 2022).

Figure 3:  
JETP timeline – work plan with milestones leading up to COP27



However, many civil society actors have concerns that just transition plans are currently not ambitious enough to take South Africa beyond dependence on coal, oil, and gas. These concerns result from public political pronouncements calling for the intensification of fossil fuel extraction, including coal (Stoddard, 2021).

Civil society is apprehensive that South Africa's government and parliament are pushing ahead with offshore oil and gas extraction. Major protests have been held over the past six months, and five out of six court case appearances by communities and environmentalists were successful in halting seismic blasting by Shell (Human, 2022).

Moreover, details of the partnership released since the announcement of the JETP are still scant, and most analysis of the partnership therefore remains somewhat speculative. The governance structures have kept most information confidential from civil society and the broader public for now. In addition, most recommendations for the implementation of a just energy transition in South Africa are focused on actions that the government and its state-owned utility, Eskom, need to take. There is little information available to the public, including civil society groups, on the donors or what the \$8.5 billion is earmarked for (Blended Finance Taskforce, n.d.). In June 2026, the Presidency of COP26 published an updated report on the JETP that provides a timeline for the next steps (see figure 3).

## 2

## The role of civil society in the South African JETP

South African civil society groups have been one of the driving forces for a just transition. Civil society groups have worked together to release reports, including a report on life after coal (Life After Coal, n.d.), the Congress of South African Trade Unions' (COSATU's) report Just Transition Blueprint for Workers, and the South African Federation of Trade Unions' (SAFTU's) statement on the government's inadequate Nationally Determined Contribution. The COSATU and SAFTU just transition statements insist that a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy can occur in a way that is fair, just, and inclusive, and places workers and communities at its centre (COSATU, 2021).

The PCC has made efforts to allow meaningful civil society engagement with the development and implementation of the Just Transition Framework. This framework seeks to address practical issues relating to jobs, local economies, skills, social support, and governance. In the development of the framework, the PCC held sessions with various actors including civil society representatives to discuss and consult on issues such as skills and capacity gaps (PCC, 2022). For instance, recently the PCC held a multi-stakeholder conference on South Africa's just transition. In May 2022 there was also a community and stakeholder consultation on a just transition in South Africa (Petrie et al., 2022).

From these two meetings, it was established that communities insist on a just transition but will work with government only if they are integral to the decision-making process. Also, with regard to skills and capacity gaps, it was evident that there are serious skills development/capacity development concerns among all communities. In addition, there are extremely high levels of distrust in government, largely as a result of corruption and poor governance (Petrie et al., 2022).

However, the development of the Just Transition Framework is happening in parallel with the work by the PCFTT on the JETP – and opportunities for civil society

input, let alone engagement, on the JETP have been even scarcer so far. The PCFTT has engaged with the PCC in two public meetings and given updates on progress on the JETP. While the engagement between the PCFTT and the PCC is good, the details of the engagement are not shared with civil society or the public. This is making it difficult for civil society, communities, and the public to engage effectively in the discussions about JETP.

The engagement processes for the JETP specifically included two side events hosted by the PCC, held during COP26 in Glasgow to open a platform for dialogue with civil society organisations. However, since then, there has been no formal engagement with civil society on the design and implementation of the JETP. Instead, the JETP implementation process has been characterised by secrecy and non-consultation. For instance, although discussions are under way between the PCFTT and the IPG regarding the nature of funding to be provided through the partnership, and while the IPG has provided the PCFTT with further detail on the financing instruments that may be offered, this information is not available to the public, including civil society. This is hindering civil society's meaningful engagement in providing feedback on the JETP processes (COP26, 2022).



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Aerial view of Kusile power station in South Africa, one of the continent's largest coal fired power stations.

This lack of information or of opportunities to provide input was also highlighted in a letter sent by the Centre for Environmental Rights, the Life After Coal Campaign, and the Fair Finance Southern Africa Coalition to the PCFTT in February 2022. The letter noted the various competing interests and challenges in the South African energy sector and questioned how the JETP would address them, including social and ecological concerns. The letter highlighted the inconsistencies in the declaration of the costs relating to a just energy transition in South Africa. It sought clarification on the discrepancies between Eskom's predicted just energy transition costs of \$30–35 billion over 15 years and the Political Declaration, which refers only to the announced donor contribution to the JETP of \$8.5 billion (Govindsamy, 2022).

The lack of available information on the details of the JETP is creating distrust between civil society and the government. This distrust is exacerbated by an ongoing battle over the future roles of renewables and fossil fuels within the government. The Energy Minister's pronouncements in support of coal and gas as South Africa's future energy source have even led some civil society groups to call on donor countries to retract the \$8.5 billion financing and any further funding (The Climate Justice Charter Movement, 2022).

Thus, the inadequate engagement of civil society has raised questions around issues of transparency, equitable access, and accountability.

**MOVING FORWARD, THERE IS A NEED TO SHARE INFORMATION ON THE JETP WITH STAKEHOLDERS, ESPECIALLY WITH CIVIL SOCIETY.**

Civil society organisations in South Africa were actively engaged in various initiatives pushing for just transition in South Africa long before the announcement of the JETP at COP26. For instance, they have authored reports outlining what just transition could mean for South African workers and communities. Even though official engagement with the JETP process is being hindered by the lack available information, South African civil society groups continue to generate and share information that could inform the implementation of the JETP.

**3**

**Lessons relevant to other countries and the G7/G20 context**

There are plans to replicate the South African JETP in other countries, mostly coal-dependent middle-income countries. However, for JETPs to meet the needs of frontline communities and workers, it is very important to engage communities and civil society early on and in a transparent and clearly structured way. This includes engagement with civil society in designing partnerships and planning implementation.

In the South African case, even though the PCC is in charge of engaging civil society on just transitions, no clear procedure is laid down, nor is there a platform to ensure continued and objective consultation. There is a pressing need for a formal platform where various stakeholders can be engaged and consulted and information can be shared. This is important in providing much-needed space for engagement but also for continuity.

In addition, there is a need for civil society to continue to organise, including across borders, to draw in solidarity from international allies. Organised civil society groups could engage effectively by building common positions around issues of just energy transition and forging strong voices in critical spaces. Civil society has a key role in advancing the conversation about what should be 'in' (or 'out') of the JETPs. Civil society must continue to remind governments and businesses of what constitutes justice in the transition to low-carbon economies.



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Windfarm on Garden Route, South Africa.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, BASED ON SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCES, THERE IS A NEED FOR DEEP REFLECTION ON THE CONTENTS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS. IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE, THE PUBLIC DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE DETAILS OF THE PARTNERSHIP, INCLUDING INFORMATION ON WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE \$8.5 BILLION PLEDGE AND WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THE SOUTH AFRICAN SIDE PLANS TO UNDERTAKE WITH THIS SUPPORT. THIS IS CURRENTLY HINDERING MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN THE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE JETP.**



MORE TRANSPARENCY AND CLEARER AVENUES FOR ENGAGEMENT WOULD ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS UNDERSTAND THE TERMS AND CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUCCESS OF THE JETP.

### Key lessons:



Ensure **engagement of civil society** in designing the partnerships and **planning** the implementation from **early on**



Establish a **formal platform** with various stakeholders as a space for **engagement** and **continuity**



Support a **regular and transparent flow of information** towards **civil society** and the public



Promote **awareness-raising** across a wider community



Integrate **different levels of the community** into the conversation



Actively demand **participation** – for example, international fellow CSOs should raise their voices to call for opportunities to participate



Solar Plants in Karoo, South Africa.

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## G7 | G20 TRACK 2 DIALOGUE

G7 | G20 Track 2 Project is a channel to allow 'trickle-down / Bottom-up' dialogues between civil society and governments to discuss climate change policies in the context of G20. Our partner CSOs in each country represents the global south countries in these dialogues.



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