



# Operationalising a Just Transition in Africa

Assessing African Countries' NDC Priorities and  
Renewable Energy Access Implementation Gaps

May, 2024



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## Call for Blogs

We are inviting blog papers for an upcoming hybrid learning and exchange forum and a peer-reviewed blog series themed: *Operationalising a Just Transition in Africa: Assessing African Countries' NDC Priorities and Renewable Energy Access Implementation Gaps*. The forum, to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024, and the proposed blog series stem from research within the collaborative project, "Operationalising a Just Transition in Africa (OJTA)", funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The collaboration includes the African Research Impact Network (ARIN) based in Nairobi, the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship's (CAS) Environmental Humanities Programme at the University of Pretoria, and SouthSouthNorth (SSN), based in Cape Town.

## Background

At a multilateral level, the positioning of just transition policies through bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) draws emphasis on inter alia social dialogue, capacity building and tailored approaches. Consequently, the OJTA project acknowledges that multiple efforts are underpinning just energy transition in Africa both at the research, policy and practice levels. The initial phase of the project produced a landscape analysis which provided an initial understanding of the just transition agenda in Africa focusing on research, policy and capacity building. The landscape analysis enabled the OJTA team to identify specific niches for impactful research, policy and capacity-building interventions.

Importantly, the landscape analysis revealed that a just energy transition, whereby affordable energy access and consumption are expanded in a low-carbon way, is a critical pillar of climate action in Africa. Consequently, several African countries, including Morocco, Senegal, Egypt, South Africa, and Kenya, are making progress in developing renewable energy resources. Southern Africa boasts the highest installed renewable capacity at 19,000 MW, while Central Africa leads in the proportion of renewables installed, with 72% coming from hydropower. Some of Africa's smaller countries, including Cabo Verde, Djibouti, Rwanda and Eswatini have set ambitious renewable energy targets.

To meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets and increase energy access, African countries must expand access using low-carbon energy solutions – including wind, solar, and gas. Africa's electricity access and consumption remain woefully behind other regions. In line with SDG7, expanding access to and use of electricity to all, including vulnerable populations to ensure that it is a "just" transition, is a priority for the continent to improve development outcomes. Fairness in access and use of clean energy is essential as it can create (i) green jobs for marginalized groups, (ii) improve productivity and create additional income, (iii) improve the health of populations in rural areas, and (iv) enhance the educational environment for children.

While countries were expected to submit more ambitious NDCs in 2020, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many submissions until 2021. From their updated NDCs, it is evident that African countries continue referencing clean energy transitions. However, early lessons on the challenges of energy-related NDC implementation are emerging. NDCs will not succeed without the right level of integration with national development policy and planning. Without clear financing plans, strong and enforceable requirements for Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) and a high degree of political commitment, they will fail.

Yet, these challenges associated with mainstreaming just energy transition into NDCs and national budgets are not new. It is within this context that this blog series and learning and exchange forum seek to create a platform to identify the priorities, progress, and implementation gaps of various African countries' NDCs related to renewable energy access, and integration of just transition considerations. The forum will also create a platform to share ideas on how to bridge these gaps, as well as outline the critical factors and policy coherence for the successful integration of renewable energy-related initiatives into just transition policies and budgets. It will offer valuable insights and case studies to assist African countries currently struggling with the implementation of renewable energy-related NDC.

Importantly, this learning and exchange forum holds significance as a platform to collectively explore how just transitions can be operationalised to address the unique energy challenges and opportunities facing the African continent. More particularly, the forum will be a platform to explore how evidence derived from the latest insights from research can be used to inform energy transition policies as well as future NDCs. The research blogs will be designed to help policymakers implement practical policies to address the greatest energy transition challenges African countries now face.

Each blog paper will be grounded in empirical research that has been galvanized by robust academic debate and channelled into practical policy applications through discussion with policy experts. The result will be a constructive just energy transition agenda for African countries' policymakers. In Africa, where the complexities of transitioning to a more sustainable and equitable economy pose an evident conundrum, this OJTA learning and exchange forum becomes a crucible for thought leadership and collaborative problem-solving.

## Scope and Objectives

The proposed blog series and forum aim to explore the integration of just transition principles into the heart of NDCs and energy access initiatives, acknowledging and addressing the social and economic impacts of moving away from fossil fuels. The concept of a just transition should be a deliberate effort to safeguard the livelihoods of those affected, embodying the belief that the shift to cleaner and more sustainable energy should leave no one behind. OJTA recognizes the need for all African countries to deepen their investment and finance provisions to meet increasing renewable energy targets as they ensure their evidence-informed policies reflect their commitments to reduce energy poverty. How these resources are provided to enable a shift to a greater proportionate share of renewable energy will inform the nature, context and framing of how a "just transition" is operationalised within each African country.

As a result, we seek contributions from African practitioners and researchers in the field of just energy transitions, to contribute their thought leadership on the priorities, progress, and implementation gaps of various African countries' NDCs related to renewable energy access and the financing thereof. These blogs should also identify pathways for bridging the identified implementation gaps, as well as outline the critical factors and policy coherence for successful integration of renewable energy-related initiatives into NDC planning and target-setting processes as well as into financial institution processes. The end goal is to offer valuable insights and case studies to assist African countries currently struggling with the implementation of renewable energy-related NDC.

Finally, through the lens of the resourcing for this pursuit, this blog series looks to gather diverse insights and experiences to provide both a continental perspective on renewable energy access and a close examination of national and local financing of renewable energy access. In the context of many frameworks, the blog series will seek to critically appraise the role of evidence and the need for justice components within the emergent policies on just energy transition(s) as well as in the implementation of current and future NDCs. The various themes have been identified to explore diverse conceptualisations of evidence-based policies and justice in various contexts and respective communities who find themselves within this transition.

Blog papers will be selected for presentation at the forum. The forum's working language will be English and will include working group discussions with a broad range of stakeholders, including, for example, business leaders, members of the judiciary, leading academics and representatives of non-governmental organizations, law reform agencies, policymakers, and other interested persons on topics related to evidence-informed policies on just energy transition in Africa.

## Thematic Focus

We invite contributions which answer the following non-exhaustive questions:

- a) How do we raise awareness and create a clear mandate for the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs across government ministries to achieve a just transition?
- b) What are some of the challenges associated with the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs in Africa?
- c) What are the next steps to go from NDC targets and commitments to projects, investment, and action on the ground? Is there a need for an 'implementation plan'?
- d) Who are the main stakeholders/ministries involved in the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs?
- e) What capacity is needed at the global, regional, national, and local levels to deliver renewable energy-related NDCs and in particular the integration of just transition considerations? How do we close the capacity gaps in finance, human resources, skills, and knowledge?
- f) What does an NDC financing plan look like, what are the funding sources for NDC implementation, and when should they be used? What are the capacities required/challenges faced in integrating just transition considerations in the financing of initiatives?
- g) Is there a need for private sector support in the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs? If so, how do we engage with and incentivise private sector support?
- h) How best do we identify and address challenges associated with lack of data availability in planning and implementing just transition policy and financing plans?

## Contributors

We invite contributions from ARIN fellows and scholars across the humanities and sciences, policy experts, activists, community leaders, and industry professionals. This diverse group of authors will ensure a comprehensive perspective on the integration of evidence in just energy transition policies on renewable energy access, and the financing thereof.

## Submission Guidelines

Interested contributors are invited to submit blog papers by **14th June 2024** for the fullest consideration. Blogs should be a maximum of 2000 words and submitted in the font Times New Roman (12pt).

Please direct any queries and submit your blog papers to [E.akinyi@arin-africa.org](mailto:E.akinyi@arin-africa.org), copying [I.ochieng@arin-africa.org](mailto:I.ochieng@arin-africa.org) and [1diananduku@gmail.com](mailto:1diananduku@gmail.com)



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