

# JUST TRANSITION OPEN AGENDA

MAY 2022



LIFE AFTER COAL  
IMPILO NGAPHANDLE  
KWAMALAHLE

# JUST TRANSITION

OPEN AGENDA MAY 2022

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From 24 to 26 November 2020, the three organisations comprising the **Life After Coal** campaign, **Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg)**, the **Centre for Environmental Rights and groundWork**, met virtually to develop a shared Open Agenda on the Just Transition. We used the Open Agenda for a Just Transition - developed at the National Coal Exchange in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, in July 2019 - as a starting point.

We chose to frame it as an agenda because it consists of actions that need to be taken to ensure a Just Transition. Some of these actions are core to our work, some actions we will work with others, and some actions we will support. The agenda is open as we invite allies to join with us, debate, and further refine this agenda. We promote engagement using share principals: inclusivity, solidarity, open democratic debate and decision making, class, race, gender, and environmental justice.

## **WE CALL FOR A JUST TRANSITION**

In an Open Democracy, government belongs to the people. Active citizens work with government, strengthening it and holding it accountable to the public interest as defined in ongoing democratic dialogue.

**We call for a Just Transition from coal and other fossil fuels, to a society based on social justice and clean, just, and renewable energy.**

### **WE DEMAND:**

1. A new, sustainable energy system to replace the current system based on dirty fossil fuels that only serves the elite;
2. the end of financing for coal and other fossil fuel investments, including gas;
3. the rehabilitation of land and water ruined by coal mining and burning;
4. concerted efforts to prepare for and deal with the impacts of climate change;
5. a new health system that works for the health of all;
6. transport and communication systems that are inclusive and enable all to take part in public debates and decision making;
7. food sovereignty and food security for all;
8. local service delivery, and an undertaking to use open democracy and self-provision to achieve it;
9. a new economic system in which economic decision making starts by asking what the needs of people are, and how to fulfil them, rather than to have an economy that serves profit -
10. a society rooted in gender justice;
11. special attention to youth and their future; and
12. open democracy as the basis for decision making.

# 1



## A NEW, JUST ENERGY SYSTEM

A driving force in the Just Transition — but only one component of it — is the need for a new energy system to replace the current coal and oil fossil fuel-based, dirty, unhealthy, wasteful, and elite energy system. While this change has its roots in pressure to move away from fossil fuels and relies on fast developing renewable energy technologies, it is equally concerned with public ownership of energy resources, decentralised energy systems, and people's access to energy.

### WE CALL FOR A TRANSFORMED, SUSTAINABLE AND JUST ENERGY SYSTEM:

1. which provides sufficient, affordable energy and services for everyone;
2. with zero fossil fuels in the electricity sector, a coal power phase-out by at least 2040, and a zero fossil fuel economy by 2050;
3. which is supported by energy efficiency, including energy-wise house design such as insulation and orientation;
4. which includes the large-scale roll-out of high-quality solar water heaters, to at least 75% of all households;
5. in which electricity generation is socially-owned and-controlled at different levels. This will include mini-grids which can feed into the grid, or can be supplemented from the grid. The emergence of community-generated electricity is supported;
6. which consists of 100% renewable energy generation;
7. in which the entire renewable energy production chain is environmentally sustainable and socially just, including in its dealings with communities and workers;
8. in which the roll-out of renewables is supported by a training and job, creating strategy for the manufacture, construction, and maintenance of renewables;
9. in which there is no generation of electricity from coal by 2040, with an immediate moratorium on the granting of new prospecting rights for coal, and exploration rights for oil and gas;
10. in which Eskom builds renewable energy generation capacity and short-term energy storage capacity;
11. with long-term storage solutions for electricity actively developed;
12. in which coal miners and coal-fired power station workers are retrained and offered new jobs and other forms of transition support;
13. in which regional coal economies are replaced with new economies that create new jobs and new livelihoods, particularly for women and youth;
14. with a flexible and smart grid;
15. where oil-based (petrol and diesel) road transportation is replaced by electric vehicles and other sustainable modes of transport; and
16. which is well regulated, based on the rule of law, and ensures ecologically sustainable development.

# 2



## **FINANCING THE TRANSITION AND NOT FINANCING COAL AND OTHER FOSSIL FUELS**

**Public money as well as private capital continue to sustain the fossil fuel-based energy system that has led to the climate crisis. This is unjust, unsustainable, and—in the case of public finance—misaligned with global and national commitments. Instead, the focus should be on financing the Just Transition.**

### **WE CALL FOR URGENT CHANGE IN THE FINANCING OF ENERGY SYSTEMS:**

1. No new finance of or investment in fossil fuel-based energy systems, projects, and companies—including coal, oil and gas. A complete shift in equity and debt financing away from fossil fuels and supporting infrastructure (railways and pipelines), and towards renewable energy.
2. End of subsidies and other financial and non-financial incentives that support the production and consumption of fossil fuels. Reorient subsidies and incentives in favour of clean, renewable energy sources.
3. Those controlling money, both private and public, make decisions that further the Just Transition.
4. Financing supports urgent action to prevent climate change, supports adaptation, and reduces inequality.
5. Transparency in public and private financing.
6. Public funding takes the lead in driving finance for a Just Transition.
7. Public funding goes to projects that provide significant job opportunities
8. No public funds are wasted on fossil fuel projects.
9. Rehabilitation funds for mines held by Department of Mineral Resources and Energy are used for job-intensive rehabilitation.
10. Voices of women and youth are heard and decisions about public funding reflect their views.
11. Big carbon emitters and polluting industries are held accountable for their emissions, comply with emissions reduction targets, and report transparently on their emissions.
12. Investment in renewable energy includes creating a manufacturing, construction, and maintenance chain with ample job opportunities.
13. All fossil fuel subsidies are redirected to the Just Transition and climate response.
14. Fully implement carbon tax at an appropriate tax rate. Ensure funds received from carbon tax or other penalties levelled against the fossil fuel sector are ring-fenced and put towards the Just Transition, climate crisis resilience, adaptation, and compensation.

# 3



## DECOMMISSIONING, REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION

Towards and at the end of coal, the landscapes of coal mining regions need to be rehabilitated. Resources like water and soil need to be returned to a healthy state and, in this process of creating *new resources*, jobs are created and provided.

### WE CALL FOR URGENT CHANGE IN THE DECOMMISSIONING, REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION SCHEMES

1. Coal mining landscapes are safe for communities. Post coal mining landscapes must be rehabilitated and used for food security and safe livelihoods. Dangerous features like open pits, accessible polluted water, smouldering coal heaps, and underground seams—are eradicated.
2. Access to land and land reform should be prioritised as a political and economic imperative to address dispossession and inequality.
3. Rehabilitated land should be redistributed to communities.
4. Communities have immediate right to use mining land that is not used (and is often leased to white farmers).
5. The state must ensure there is adequate financial provision for coal mine rehabilitation by implementing the 2015 Financial Provision Regulations and thereafter only tightening the laws around financial provision, and enforcement of rehabilitation provisions. There should be transparency around financial provision for rehabilitation.
6. Accurate assessment of financial provision must include a standard of rehabilitation that enables post-mining land use that is economically beneficial to mining affected communities.
7. Information about the full scope of rehabilitation must be available and published so the extent of the damage is public. We—coal-affected communities, activists, labour, civil society, and the public—want to know what the mining and rehabilitation industry is doing. The Just Transition should be a resourced, institutionalised function in the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy.
8. The state at all spheres should develop multi-stakeholder forums where community members have the appropriate decision-making powers about the rehabilitation and restoration of local land, and have the opportunity to interact with the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy, Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries, Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, and the Minerals Council of South Africa.
9. The state and all stakeholders should support issue literacy and access to information for all stakeholders involved in rehabilitation.
10. Rehabilitation funds should be costed to include achieving alternative economic activities from the land.

# 4



## LIVING WITH CLIMATE IMPACTS

Climate change mitigation and adaptation are not separate, for example agro-ecology produces food, restores the soil and can absorb carbon from the atmosphere. But regardless of the success of the Just Transition and climate change mitigation measures, it is inevitable that we will have to live with and adapt to increasingly dangerous climate change impacts.

### TO SUCCESSFULLY DEAL WITH CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS, WE MUST ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING:

1. All planning processes, including land use planning and infrastructure, and service delivery planning, must account and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
2. In urban and semi-urban areas, climate adaptation measures must include appropriate siting of residential developments, improving storm water drainage, and creating and protecting green spaces.
3. South Africa should prepare for climate refugees and migration, which includes international and national legislative reform.
4. Climate change impacts will increase the need and urgency for universal grants to support people in communities to start their own initiatives and to have the resources to respond and adapt to climate emergencies like droughts and other extreme weather events. Addressing climate injustice requires addressing SA's deeply entrenched inequalities.
5. Government institutions should support food gardens and protect them, for example in the event of droughts or other disasters.
6. Government must provide decent, climate resilient housing.
7. Government must secure extra protection for areas that are important for our climate resilience, including strategic water source areas (SWSAs) and areas crucial for food production. To this end, it must implement the National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy, and cater for the inclusion of communities in the management of those areas.
8. Municipalities and provinces must be properly resourced for climate adaptation. They should come up with plans and strategies to address climate disasters. National government should unlock funds and other resources for these purposes.
9. Prepare people to anticipate climate change impacts through comprehensive nationwide awareness raising campaigns.
10. The state and mining companies should play an active role and contribute financially in Just Transition processes especially in mining affected communities.



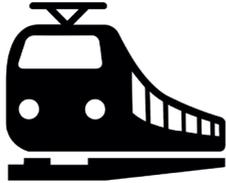
# HEALTH

**The climate crisis is an acute health emergency with far-reaching effects on both human health and the environments that sustain that health. The climate crisis and the health of citizens are interlinked and have many of the same solutions. The burning of fossil fuels in the production of energy, and the air pollution that it produces, is the leading cause of climate change and one of the world's greatest health risks. Providing clean energy to everyone who needs it will dramatically improve the climate, as well as human health and economy. Health is at the core of the wellbeing of a society. Our health has been injured by our society's reliance on fossil fuels. The health system is already in crisis and needs radical proactive change to be able to cope with current public health challenges, as well as the current and anticipated damages induced by slow onset and rapid climate change events.**

## THESE NECESSARY CHANGES INCLUDE:

1. Internalising the health costs of coal and other fossil fuels to the polluters' accounts. The burden of health impacts currently falls directly on poor people, as well as the Department of Health with massive and crippling budgetary implications.
2. Providing active and accountable leadership to urgently acknowledge and address the ongoing public health disaster caused by unsafe levels of air pollution in South Africa.
3. Recognition by policy and decision makers that economic activity that sacrifices people's health can never be labelled as sustainable or justifiable.
4. Mobilising affected people along with health professionals with a voice in government, to shift a government that is unable or unwilling to act;
5. Assisting health actors to understand the climate and health benefits of their actions, rather than see these as "burdens".
6. Building a fully functional health care system that realises the Preamble and objectives in the National Health Act of 2004; this includes sections 24(a), 27, and 28 of the Constitution.
7. Recognising that the South African health system is not coping with the current burden of that, and climate change is only going to create more pressure.
8. Educating health professionals in adaptive management to deal with emergent health threats like COVID-19.
9. Implementing the Department of Health's Climate Change Health Adaptation Plan of 2014 through co-operation between all responsible government authorities.
10. Building a functioning cooperative governance system, through a public health approach, where industry, all government departments, and health and education actors and institutions are thinking about how they impact each other.
11. The effective and transparent monitoring of health data related to environmental health.

# 6



## TRANSPORT

## AND

## COMMUNICATIONS

Mobility underlies many aspects of wellbeing and resilience, and is a key energy-using sector which is currently reliant on fossil fuels. Transport is needed to get to work, school, access medical care, keep ties with friends and family and to explore the world around us. Transport choices are currently severely limited and expensive for most South Africans. Accessible and affordable communication enables people to learn, relax, and participate in public life and public debate.

### WE WANT TO SEE:

1. Communication and transport sectors that support a wellbeing economy.
2. Accessible, reliable, safe, affordable, sustainable, and environmentally friendly transport.
3. That the railway system becomes a safe and reliable form of transport, and that this reduces the number of cars on the road.
4. Interlinked transport that is cheap, reliable, clean (especially for the poor and the working class).
5. All road transport, including buses, taxis, scooters and motorbikes, in the form of battery electric vehicles (BEVs), based on electricity generated through renewables.
6. Our transport systems owned by the people.
7. Taxis treating travellers with dignity and respect.
8. A taxi system that co-operates with the Just Transition.
9. Diversification of the transport system to enhance the mobility of South Africans, e.g. through scooters or motorbikes.
10. Our new transport system must accommodate those with disabilities.
11. Better, affordable and accessible internet connectivity infrastructure.

# 7

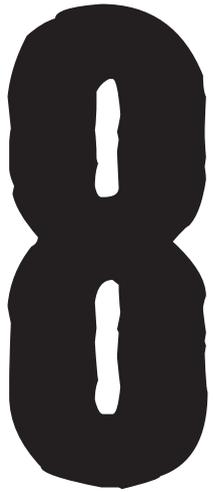


## FOOD **AND** FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Food is a form of energy. It is basic to human life, and it is a human right. Food availability is the result of systems of land ownership, access to water, seeds, skills, knowledge, market opportunities, and opportunities for autonomous food production. It is crucial for wellbeing in a society. The current dominant food system is profit driven and relies heavily on the need for fossil fuels. This creates opportunities for a new food system.

### WE WILL PURSUE:

1. An end to monoculture industrial food processes which are carbon intensive and toxic, and need large amounts of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. Instead, we need to work with nature to produce (organic) food that is local and doesn't need to travel long distances.
2. The creation of sustainable organic agricultural livelihoods, which produce a surplus that can be sold locally.
3. Water and land reform to support emerging farmers. This must prioritise land ownership for women.
4. Localisation at every level of food production to cope with climate change and increased droughts. The reduction of water waste by large scale irrigation and large scale agroindustries.
5. Protection of water sources against industrial farming impact.
6. A move away from water-intensive extractive and industrial activities.
7. Strict monitoring of water users such as fracking, coal mining, industrialised farming.
8. A focused food policy, aimed at ensuring food sovereignty for all.
9. The reorganisation of urban areas to encourage urban food production.
10. Education that enables everybody to grow food even where there is no access to land and limited water.
11. Food growing in schools so everyone has access to food.



# LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY **AND** OPEN DEMOCRACY

Local government is the level of government closest to the people and their immediate concerns. It has a crucial role to play in building and supporting the resilience of infrastructure as well as people it serves. It is the first line of defence in terms of disaster management. Proper local services should build people's resilience, reconstruct and climate-proof settlements, fix broken roads, storm water drains, water and sewage pipes, street lighting, and provide proper municipal services (including waste water treatment works), water, use renewables such as solar water heaters, and be based on accountability and participation.

## WE WILL USE AN OPEN DEMOCRACY APPROACH TO PUSH FOR:

1. Local governments that work with people, not taking decisions behind closed doors but communicating with community members.
2. Functional municipalities under the rule of law. Waste management, drinking water provision, and the management of wastewater should be efficient and effective.
3. Waste management follows the zero waste approach.
4. Capacity building, training and upskilling for municipal staff.
5. Quick responses from local government to community enquiries.
6. Local government is clear on how to deliver Constitutional Rights (such as health, sanitation, etc.) and basic services.
7. Local government functions properly with no political interference in the business of local government. Politicians are only responsible for oversight.
8. Functional accountability mechanisms through which communities can hold municipalities accountable, including for financial mismanagement at local level.
9. The creation of local jobs to support residents. This should include jobs in renewable energy.
10. Local government that prepares for the impacts of climate change. People should not be living in floodplains, and communities are water resilient.
11. Local government is transparent. The Integrated Development Plan process should be transparent, and citizens should be able to access or attend council meetings. There should be adherence to the basic principles of democracy, where decisions are made in terms of bottom-up approach and a Just Transition can be realised.
12. Every municipality has a climate change mitigation resilience strategy – by latest 2028. The planning decisions need to be put into place now.

# 9



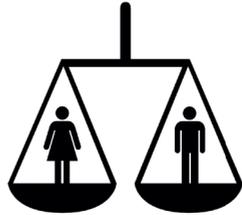
## ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The core dynamic behind climate change and other planetary destruction and environmental injustices, is the profit-driven economy in its neoliberal/austerity form. “The economy”, which is merely a set of institutions, has subordinated both society and nature to its narrow and elitist needs. A new economic system is necessary and the Just Transition provides a space in which to deal with this. A wellbeing economy is based on the idea that economic decision making should start by asking what the needs of people are, and how to fulfil them, rather than to have an economy that serves profit. In such an economy, it will be possible to do socially necessary work and reward it, rather than leave it to the owners of capital to decide what work should and should not be done.

### THE WAY OUR ECONOMY WORKS NEEDS TO CHANGE:

1. A universal basic income grant must be implemented as a step in the direction of a caring economy. Such a grant should not exclude caregivers from getting Covid relief and other grants.
2. The economy needs to prepare to deal with the expected job losses in the coal economy.
3. Access to land and land reform to benefit in the first instance mining-affected communities, particularly the dispossessed, as coal mines approach closure.
4. Wellbeing in coal affected areas should be measured by including health metrics.
5. There should be a social protection package that is adequate to people’s actual needs, including municipal services.
6. Gender dimensions of government budgeting, spending and grants should be made transparent.
7. Illicit financial flows which take money out of the country should be stopped.
8. Licit financial flows which take money out of the country should be regulated more strictly.
9. A more progressive tax structure, including a wealth tax and a carbon tax, must be introduced.
10. We need transparency on beneficial ownership.

# 10



## GENDER JUSTICE

The path to a Just Transition must be rooted in the principles of gender justice. This means taking into consideration the legacy of gender discrimination and its effects in society, as well as the realities of the care burdens of women in society and the ongoing, pervasive nature of gender-based violence. A Just Transition will be one that has women leaders at the forefront of decision-making, as well as implementation.

**GENDER JUSTICE IS A CROSS-CUTTING ISSUE AND MUST BE INCORPORATED INTO ALL ASPECTS OF A JUST TRANSITION, ENSURING THAT:**

1. All decisions must be made with a gendered lens, taking into consideration gender relations and complexities on a national and local level.
2. All processes and decisions must take into consideration that women, non-binary and LGBTQIA+ perspectives are preconditions for being fully representative. This cannot be done without women, non-binary, and LGBTQIA+.
3. Land ownership by women and non-binary people must be prioritised.
4. Job creation for women and non-binary people must be prioritised.



# YOUTH AND EDUCATION

The youth will inherit a planet heavily impacted by climate change. This will include not only disasters in the natural realm, but also very serious social challenges like economic breakdown, government breakdown impacting on safety, health, service provision and disaster management.

The Just Transition should promise and deliver a better future for our young people, and prepare them for coming difficulties. There are already prominent youth activists fighting for a liveable future. Their voices should be taken seriously.

**WHILE WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOUTH, LIKE GENDER, IS A CROSSCUTTING ISSUE, THERE ARE SPECIFIC ASPECTS THAT NEED ATTENTION:**

1. All decisions should be made from a perspective of intergenerational justice. The interests of those still to be born should be taken into account.
2. The youth have a special perspective on the future and their voices should be taken seriously.
3. Education should prepare youth for living in a climate impacted world
4. The youth should be able to look forward to opportunities for work, livelihoods and wellbeing.

# 12



## OPEN

# DEMOCRACY

**The Just Transition process deals with complex and interlinked issues. This requires dialogue, open debate and democratic decision making about the future. The information at the basis of all plans and decisions should be transparent. The people most affected, particularly on the coalfields, must be part of information gathering, analysis and decision making from the start. The South African constitution gives us the rights that can make the Just Transition possible. Community activists have committed themselves to engaging with local government in a democratic manner.**

## A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION REQUIRES THAT:

1. There is access to information.
2. There is freedom of association to mobilise, organise, participate and protest if needed.
3. The municipality involves communities in real participatory decision making through a stakeholders' forum. We want real public participation.
4. Ward committees should be chosen openly, based on geography, not on politics.
5. There must be participation in decision making, service delivery, accountability and access to information. We want to be part of the decision-making process.
6. Local government should act in a transparent and accountable way, including monitoring and evaluation of services such as waste and sewage.
7. Municipal Integrated Development Plans and budget consultations must be transparent and there needs to be records of decisions.
8. Each municipality must have representatives of every provincial department when decisions are made, to overcome working in isolation.
9. The municipality must go to the community. It must consult with the community on any development regarding mines and power stations.
10. The national debate about the Just Transition should be open and accessible to all, and the playing field should be levelled for disadvantaged participants.

This **Open Agenda** on the **Just Transition** was developed by the three partner organisations of the **Life After Coal Campaign – Earthlife Africa, groundWork** and the **Centre for Environmental Rights**. We encourage open debate, suggestions, and engagement. It is a living document intended for continuous revision.

For more information about this book, contact [info@lifeaftercoal.org.za](mailto:info@lifeaftercoal.org.za) or visit [www.lifeaftercoal.org.za](http://www.lifeaftercoal.org.za)



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