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DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



▶ Trade unions actions towards climate change and a just transition

A trade union guide

▶ **Trade unions actions towards climate change and a just transition**

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► Abbreviations and acronyms

ATGWU	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
ACTRAV	Bureau for Workers' Activities
BRT	Bus-Rapid-Transport
BWI	Building Workers International
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CDR	Carbon Dioxide Removal
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
COTU-K	Central Organization of Trade Unions Kenya
DTDA	Danish Trade Union Development Agency
EAC	East African Community
EATUC	East African Trade Union Council
EDF	Électricité de France
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Commission of South Africa
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GHANA TUC	Trades Union Congress, Ghana
FH	Danish Trade Union Confederation
JTP	Just Transition Platform
ILO	International Labour Organization
IndustriALL	IndustriALL Global Union
IOE	International Organization of Employers
IRMA	Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
ITUC-Africa	African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation
JET	Just Energy Transition Plan

KenGen	Kenya Electricity Generating Company PLC
KETAWU	Kenyan Electrical Trades and Allied Workers' Union
KNAQ	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
NaMATA	Nairobi Metropolitan Area Transport Authority
NITA	National Industrial Training Authority
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NOTU	National Organization of Trade Unions
MCTU	Malawi Congress of Trade Unions
PCC	Presidential Commission on Climate Change
PSI	Public Services International
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLLC	Sierra Leone Labour Congress
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TAWU	Transport Workers Unions of Kenya
TEVETA	Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



► Preface

These are challenging times for workers and their organizations amidst formidable and complex challenges. New and renewed international conflicts and wars create widespread human suffering and deepening divisions. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals is unravelling. Rising interest rates and looming debt distress make it harder for developing and climate vulnerable countries to address their own socio-economic challenges. High cost of living, fiscal strain, and migration weaken international solidarity.

Most existentially, the world is now witnessing the severe and escalating impacts of climate changes. The implications are particularly acute and poignant for working people, and particularly in developing countries, despite their minimal contribution to global emissions, finds itself at the forefront of environmental vulnerability. The transition from carbon-based and fossil-fuel dependent economies put pressure on the international trade union movement to protect workers from being left behind and reduce structural effects that fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable groups.

Paradoxically, trade union members and their jobs are on the frontline of the green transition. Competent and skilled technicians, electricians, blacksmiths, etc., develop and build low-emitting technologies and industries that physically make up the green transition. In this light, trade unions are faced with several challenges and organizational dilemmas, such as job security and retention, violations of labour rights, retrenchments, low social protection and equality, skills mismatch, lack of climate finances, polluting companies, digital and disruptive technologies and exploding poverty and informal economy because of a global green transition.

These challenges have highlighted the urgent need for innovative solutions and sustainable union strategies that can help workers and businesses adapt to changing circumstances while at the same time mitigating the negative impact of conflicts and climate change on the world of work. Trade unions are not 'either-or' in supporting green transitions or job security, but they adopt various strategies. They adopt a mix of reactive and defensive approaches that protect the status quo (and are incrementally proactive) and supportive approaches to advance a just transition with the least costs to its members.

The aim of this document is to offer practical guidance to trade union leaders and their representatives in developing countries on how to integrate environmental and low-carbon sustainability and a just transition into their daily work. The guide is designed to serve as a learning platform, allowing readers to exchange experiences and explore different approaches and trade-offs when creating space in existing workers' organizations—as well as when negotiating with employers and governments—especially on energy transition.

The guide relies on practical and important lessons on overcoming dilemmas and challenges, internally and externally, in the trade union movement in climate-vulnerable and developing countries.

Some of the dilemmas and trade-offs that often pose problems for trade unions and their members include identifying future green jobs, protecting current high-carbon jobs while promoting new lower-emitting and green jobs, social protection, skills development, social dialogue, and negotiations, the role of governments, employee innovation at workplaces, international collaboration, and disruptive technologies.

It also draws on evidence-based cases at different levels from developing countries with recommendations from various trade unions highlighting how to overcome obstacles in relations with employers, governments, climate change NGOs, and communities. Will the trade union movement face new forms of activism and organizing, and will they have to muster innovative alliances in the future?

We expect this guide to improve the technical knowledge and skills of union leaders, educators, organizers, and green labour representatives. We hope it will bring renewed commitment to negotiate a just transition towards lower carbon-based labour markets and national economies.

It is against this ambition that this guide is published to share knowledge and experiences that will enhance the trade union movement's membership base and voice in society to influence policymaking toward a just and sustainable transition. This guide hereby enacts and supports the implementation of relevant ILO Recommendations and Conventions.

We are grateful to the authors of the guide (Kent Jensen and Mohammed Mwamadzingo) for taking up the challenge and for their achievements.



Maria Helena André,
Director,
Bureau for Workers' Activities, ACTRAV
International Labour Organization, Geneva



Morten Skov Christiansen
President,
Danish Trade Union Confederation,
FH Denmark

► Acknowledgements

Trade unions worldwide are increasingly aware of the growing importance of a just transition to environmental sustainability and low-carbon societies. As institutional social partners in labour markets, they are in ideal positions to influence employers, governments, and communities to the benefit of existing and future union members, surrounding local communities, and the public.

The guide is a collaborative effort between the Bureau for Workers' Activities of the ILO (ACTRAV) and the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA). The idea of the guide was endorsed by selected peer-reviewers from international, global, and national trade unions participating in two global workshops on the role of trade unions to ensure a just transition held in Kenya in 2022 and 2023.

The workshops brought together labour representatives from Ghana (Ghana TUC), Kenya (COTU-K and electrical, glass, and agricultural unions), Nepal (GEFONT), South Africa (NUM), and Sierra Leone (SLLC). Sub-regional and regional organizations (ITUC-Africa and EATUC) and global union federations (IndustriALL Global Union, ITF, and PSI) also participated in the workshop. We are greatly indebted to all participants and peer reviewers who read the early versions.

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Lone Ilum Christiansen
Director, DTDA,
Copenhagen, Denmark



Kent Jensen
Head of Programming, DTDA,
Copenhagen, Denmark



Mohammed Mwamadzingo
Independent Consultant,
Nairobi, Kenya



► 1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time. The efforts to mitigate carbon emissions and adapt to climate change effects already have far-reaching implications for our daily lives and the world of work. The consequences of climate change, such as rising temperatures, flooding, and extreme weather events, are already being felt worldwide. While mitigation policies are mainly directed at industrialized countries (as they have the most considerable emissions), developing nations are also concerned about the impact of such policies on their economies. Considering national circumstances, it is essential to have common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Most developing countries have limited economic diversification and are heavily dependent on few industries, making them vulnerable to economic, pandemic, and climate shocks. Rapid population increase, fiscal deficits, and limited innovation capacities also pose further challenges for these countries. The economic decisions of developing countries are also influenced by external factors beyond their control, making them more susceptible to economic uncertainties and crises.

In 2013, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted a notable resolution that aimed to promote sustainable development, decent work, and green jobs. This resolution laid the groundwork for creating the ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all and the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. The ILO Guidelines and the Paris Agreement both emphasize the importance of a just transition and the creation of decent work as critical components of climate change.¹

Additionally, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) and the Green Initiative were established to support a fair, just, and equitable transition that does not leave workers behind. While progress has been made towards these goals, the necessary scale of efforts to meet the SDGs by 2030 is insufficient.

At the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit, 46 countries made a significant commitment to prioritize jobs in ambitious climate action and to promote a just transition. To help foster concrete measures, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative, which is spearheaded by the ILO. Recently, a tripartite resolution was agreed upon at the ILO conference in 2023 concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.

The initiatives bring together governments, workers' and employers' organizations, international institutions, academia, and civil society to deliver changes. It is important to recognize that the transition to de-carbonization affects many industries and occupations, including those involved in manufacturing, mining, transport, agriculture, construction, electricity, air conditioning, waste management, and more.

As this shift occurs, some jobs will disappear, others will be restructured, or entirely new opportunities will emerge. As such, this transition must be managed in a just and socially responsible way, focusing on protecting workers' rights and ensuring that those impacted by these changes are supported.

A just transition must be managed in a fair and equitable way for all. This includes providing social protection for millions of workers who may lose their jobs, as well as promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements with employers as a key platform for collaboration. One critical aspect of this transition is upskilling and reskilling workers to thrive in low-emitting industries and sectors.

¹ A just transition is crucial to ensure that the burden of climate action does not disproportionately fall on vulnerable workers and communities. It is about safeguarding workers' rights, creating new green jobs, and promoting inclusive policies that address inequality and social injustices.

This will require significant public and private investments in technical vocational education and training (TVET), both to develop new skills in low-emitting industries and to support workers in acquiring these skills. This is especially in industries that are impacted by new and disruptive technologies.

To do this, it is essential to recognize that global solidarity is needed to address the challenges of climate change. Rich countries are often the biggest CO₂ emitters, while poorer and climate-vulnerable countries are amongst the least responsible for causing the climate crisis yet are the worst affected by it. They may be more vulnerable to changes in the world of work.

It is against this background that trade unions must advocate for and address the dire need for a just transition with the least costs to its members and the world of work in general. Trade unions advocate workers' interests and have traditionally focused on protecting employment and ensuring good working conditions and fair labour practices.

However, as consequences of climate change become more evident, trade unions increasingly recognize the need to address sustainability and environmental issues. By engaging in climate actions, trade unions aim to safeguard workers' rights, create new green jobs, and advocate for a smooth transition to de-carbonized economies.

In doing this, trade unions have learned important lessons to promote a just transition while acknowledging critical dilemmas and compromises (including trade-offs) when balancing job security with mitigation and adaptation to environmental and climate changes in the labour markets.



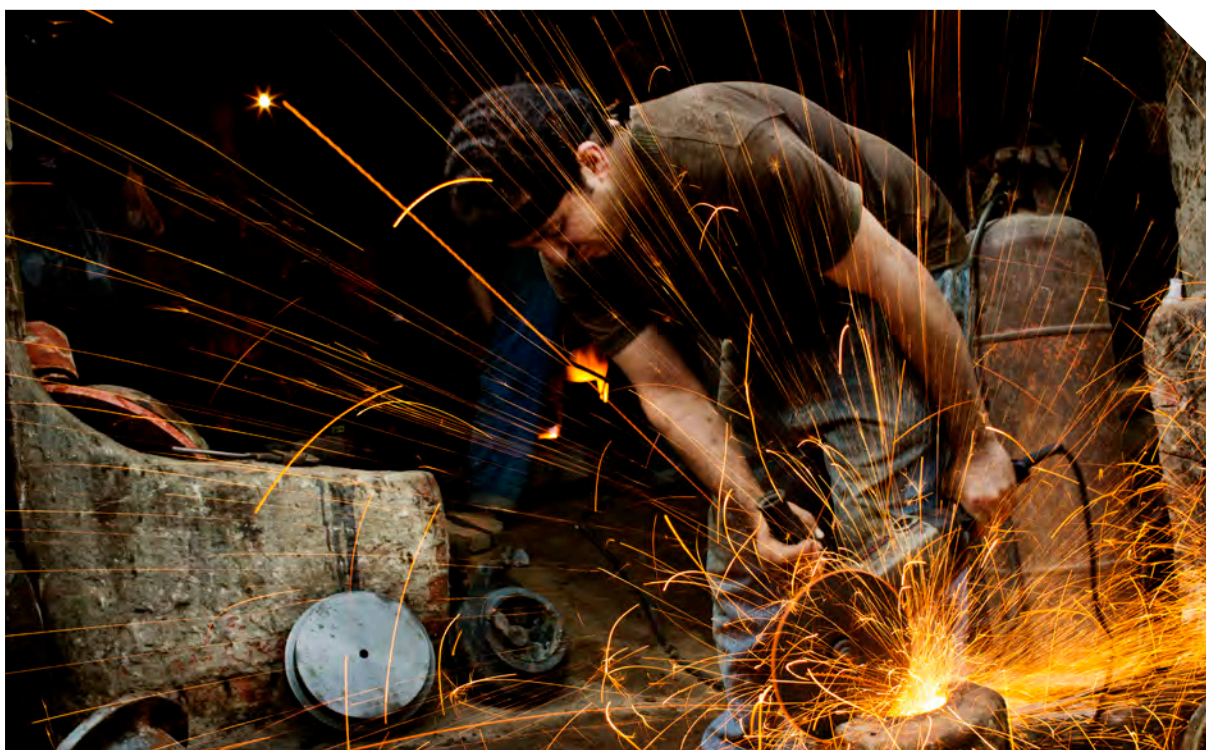
► 2. Employment and job security

(a) Job creation and security

Employment in a transition towards low-carbon economies is both a challenge and an opportunity for trade unions. It is a challenge because job security is the “raison d’être” of trade unions, whose main purpose is to defend and protect their members from job losses and indecent and unhealthy work. It is an opportunity because a green transition—if it is just and fair—has employment and decent work potential under the right regulatory frameworks.

Just transition with decent employment options is gaining more traction with policymakers and investors globally. However, trade-offs and dilemmas present themselves in the different realities on the ground in developing countries. Job insecurity has been a thorny issue for many trade union leaders, especially in high-carbon industries in the energy sector and especially linked to coal, oil, and gas. Trade union leaders often weigh up the members’ interests in job transition versus better unemployment insurance schemes and other compensation measures. Others support improved competitiveness and productivity (and employment) as long as it is socially responsible—rather than a race to the bottom.

From the ILO’s perspective, employment is affected in four ways as climate policies reorient the economies towards greater sustainability: job creation, job substitution, job elimination, and job transformation.² For the ILO, green jobs are decent jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment. They can be found in both traditional sectors (such as manufacturing and construction) and emerging green sectors (with renewable energy and energy efficiency).³ Such jobs span over all sectors and industries and cover all workers including those in emerging industries, for example, renewable energy, e-vehicles, and power systems, but also in other sectors getting “greener” due to energy-efficiency, digitalization, consumer interests (hotels), etc.



2 ILO, Just Transition of the Workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs, 2015.

3 https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/news/WCMS_220248/lang--en/index.htm

Green jobs improve energy and raw materials efficiency, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems, and support adaptation to the effects of climate changes. However, one of the contentious issues in the international climate change debates in developing countries is to which extent the green transition away from high-carbon to low-carbon industries and services causes jobs to be lost, created, adapted, substituted, or even relocated to blue, white, green, or brown sectors of the economy.

(b) Job forecasting

Recent global projections suggest a net global increase in employment across many sectors with direct effects in renewable energy, industry, digital and disruptive technologies (electricity), transport/marine, and gig platform economies. Indirect net effects include supplying sectors. The ILO projects that 100 million jobs will be created by 2030, while 78 million may be destroyed, redefined, or relocated.⁴ Also, the ILO forecasts how the green transition can create millions of jobs if major investments in re- and upskilling are made.

The international trade union movement, however, raises concerns about how the transition towards climate neutrality varies significantly across climate-vulnerable and developing countries, sectors, framework conditions for competitiveness and productivity, etc., and affects vulnerable groups disproportionately (e.g., skills mismatch, high energy prices, low incomes, and illiteracy).

In an ILO and IRENA overview of the renewable energy employment landscape of 2022, global jobs in renewable energy have almost doubled in the last 10 years. However, they found a concentration in a few countries and uneven geographical footprints with over 40% of 13.7 million. Renewable energy jobs located in China, 14% in Europe, and only 2.3 % in Africa.⁵

For this reason, projections on direct and indirect employment effects in sectors and developing countries are strategically vital to trade unions in order to anticipate advancing employment shifts – especially for global trade union organizations, such as IndustriALL Global Union, International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), and Public Services International (PSI). Global Union Federations (GUFs) can produce large-scale forecasts across borders on future job possibilities and skills requirements—both direct as well as in national and global value chains— while at the same time assessing the number of jobs expected to be lost.

To consolidate projection data and levelling the playing field, some global unions and sectoral unions collaborate with employers to jointly forecast employment trends in high or low-carbon sectors and supply chains to ensure common interests and playing fields.

(c) Different employment strategies

In this light, job security and bread and butter issues remain among trade union members' most prevalent objectives. Trade unions adopt strategies to ensure job security while at the same time promoting a just transition.

For example, as in the case of the out-phasing carbon-intensive mining and fossil fuel-driven energy industries, the strategy of the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) and other likeminded unions in hard-to-abate sectors is about redeployment and repurposing to transfer mine workers into new or alternative jobs that are decent and environment-friendly in outward companies or 'downstream' industries or relocated to other regions or countries. This strategy also includes representing sub-contracted and outsourced mine workers in negotiations with multinational mining companies who ignore them in redeployment and upskilling plans for mining communities.

⁴ Achieving a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (ilo.org)

⁵ IRENA, Renewable energy and jobs: Annual Review 2023.

On the other hand, the Kenya Electrical Trades and Allied Workers Union (KETAWU) has taken a different approach. It illustrates how trade unions with skilled members like electricians and technicians in high demand to implement and innovate disruptive technologies to reduce carbon footprints in the hydro and geothermal-dominated energy sector in Kenya.

During previous retrenchments, KETAWU negotiated job guarantees for workers who upgraded their technical skills afterward. In South Africa, NUM has also used a similar up-skilling strategy. However, there is always the need to trade-off whether new jobs will match the out-phased jobs in terms of contractual arrangements, incomes, etc., or constitute social dumping.

Another example is how the Transport Workers Unions of Kenya (TAWU), the largest trade union for transport workers in Kenya) in collaboration with ITF, seek to protect existing jobs in the transition from petroleum-fueled Matatu-taxis to new public e-busses in the bus rapid transit corridors (BRT) introduced in the City of Nairobi in 2022. Despite public reassurances of new jobs in the BRT corridors, the transport union is skeptical about the fair distribution of employment after Matatu drivers lose their jobs without any certification to drive e-buses. In other similar BRT initiatives (e.g., Johannesburg), an agreement was reached between unions and local authorities to re-deploy and license matatu drivers to become e-bus drivers, thus preventing unemployment, disputes, and social unrest.

Thirdly, trade union centres that address new green jobs in the informal economy demonstrate using different strategies to promote new 'green' jobs. For example, in Nepal and Sierra Leone, negotiations between trade unions and local municipalities have resulted in new green jobs for female union members in climate-friendly and de-carbonizing and waste management sectors.

The General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) has created new jobs for its female members as drivers in e-tricycles, while the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) organizes female waste pickers in new jobs in the informal economy that contribute to the clean-up of the polluted capital, Freetown. Both cases illustrate interesting examples of how trade unions promote gender equality and non-discrimination by ensuring that women and girls fully benefit from emerging employment opportunities in emerging industries.

The overall takeaway from the cases shows that job security, employment, and bread and butter are the first priorities and that trade union leaders from trade union centres and sectoral unions draw on different employment strategies. Especially where union membership is in sharp decline, union leaders primarily protect their members from the daily fundamental labour rights violations (such as unfair dismissals and harassment) and precarious work with few resources or capacity to conduct job forecasts.

So, circumstances differ markedly. When discussing decent employment in a just transition, we should do so against a background of different sectoral and geographical circumstances and internal trade union capacities. This also includes different stages of carbon neutrality in developing countries.

Lessons learned: Employment and job security

National job projections are influential instruments to trade unions that need to be prepared for a green transition or introduction of new technologies or production modes. Since this information often resides with employers, projections should be prioritized and possibly developed with employers jointly.

Trade unions need to be careful when setting high expectations amongst its constituencies regarding green and decent jobs. Trade union leaders may need to weigh up the interests of their members in carbon-intensive industries versus those working in low-carbon industries.

They may have to accept trade-offs regarding employment guarantees on new jobs with wages, social protection, benefits, etc. This is particularly important in high-emitting sectors like energy, mining, transport and agriculture where trade unions need to negotiate redeployment, re-purposing and compensatory measures for retrenched workers.

If decent jobs cannot be guaranteed in a green transition, then new green, but precarious, jobs risk compromising the long-term strengths and membership levels of trade unions. This may require extending organizing strategies to include workers in the informal economy and proactively seeking to attract new members in emerging industries, such as the gig, circular, blue and green economies.

Employment transfers or redeployments may cause conflicts amongst trade unions if members are 'skilled' out of their original occupation and thus need to join other sectoral federations. Thus, trade unions can be faced with a trade-off and encouraged to discuss questions of who to organize to avoid demarcation disputes within the trade union movement. In future, this development may raise the question of forming new and broader sectoral unions.



► 3. Skills development

(a) Skills shortages in developing countries

A critical concern raised by trade unions in seeking a just transition is the lack of accessible, inexpensive, and practical technical and vocational education and up-and re-skilling to facilitate job creation (and transition) opportunities for low and medium-skilled workers. The dominant position of many trade union leaders is that no green transition can take place without more skilled workers. For example, wind farms cannot be built without blacksmiths, and no heat or water pumps can exist without refrigeration technicians. It underlines the fact that shifts to lowcarbon economies that are technically feasible and economically viable are only possible with vocationally skilled workers and competent enterprises.

International conventional forecasts with net employment possibilities in the green transition are conditioned on the availability of a reskilled and upskilled labour force.⁶ Also, projections from phasing down high-emitting industries and investing in new green, renewable, and low-carbon industries assume and are conditional on large-scale investments in national skills development for impacted workers.

Unfortunately, the reality in most developing countries is that skills shortages already pose a significant constraint to the transition to greener, climate-friendly technologies and economies and new jobs. The same challenge applies to work with new materials, clean processes, and technologies.



6 https://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_706922/lang--en/index.htm

In addition to the negative and unpopular perception of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), many national TVET infrastructures are under-financed, have poor academic profiles, and are being run by outdated government-run training institutions. At the same time, sporadic corporate on-the-job training programs only accommodate employees in the formal economy and with limited apprentices.

(b) Need for well-endowed skills development

The shortage of skills, coupled with the emergence of new disruptive and digitally ‘cleaner’ technologies, has led trade unions (in collaboration with progressive employers) to venture more urgently into new territories to promote on-the-job training. This is undertaken through systematic and private/publicly financed vocational training and education to serve low- and medium-skilled members. Joint forecasts between trade unions and employers’ organizations often rest upon the common understanding that green transitions are unlikely to occur without adequate customized and generic skills development.

One of the main priorities for trade union leaders is to ensure that retrained or upskilled members still enjoy decent work. Unions are concerned about increasing the informal economy, particularly among the youth and women workers. Young and female low-skilled workers do not get new formal jobs but rather become more precarious with new technologies, including in the gig and platform economy. They may only have time for short, practical, accessible, and less expensive vocational courses that are not easily available. The need to upskill low-skilled union members is, therefore, particularly important.

Forecasting needs to include future skills needs to revitalize national TVET systems and design and provide appropriate, ‘demand-driven’ and practical skills training services-particularly dual apprenticeships. Often, broader social and general qualifications are equally in demand as technical skills because they can be transferred across occupations, increasing members’ employability and mobility. To demonstrate how trade unions exercise their influence on skills development, the next section introduces the most common approaches at international, national, and local levels:

1. International advocacy

In the run-up to COP28 in 2023, national trade union centres adopted a proactive strategy at the International Labour Conference Conference in 2023 and negotiated with employers and government a recommendation on apprenticeships to disseminate knowledge and build skills to the future of work in, for example, low- and high emitting industries.⁷

At a sectoral level, the case of IndustriALL illustrates how a global union federation uses its international position and leverage of 50 million members in 140 countries to put pressure on multinational corporations such as ENGIE (a global energy and services group) and EDF (Électricité de France) in global framework agreements to take responsibility for investing in green skills development and social justice. This demonstrates how national trade unions can use global framework agreements by GUFs to convince national corporations to invest in vocational skills in general, not only specific green competencies.

2. National policy development

Many national trade union centres lobby decision-makers in national governments and TVET authorities to modernize national educational and skills development frameworks to make them more flexible, affordable, and in line with employers’ and workers’ needs for future competencies.

⁷ ILO, Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

Cases from East and Southern Africa demonstrate how trade union negotiators strategically prioritize lobbying of national finance budget negotiations to address public finance deficits in national TVET systems. Trade unions also press for more technical skills, including mastering advanced technologies and environmentally friendly production processes and energy optimization. Similarly, trade unions call for emphasis on skills development levies to be channeled to technical colleges rather than to tertiary institutions.

Another strategy by most national trade union centres is to address the deficits in tripartite governance. They call for the boosting of national and sector skills authorities to accommodate competencies and curricula needed in emerging low-carbon industries (e.g., for Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics–STEM–competencies). For example, national trade union centres such as Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC), Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU), and Central Organisation of Trade Unions in Kenya (COTU-K) have seats in national vocational and qualifications skills authorities and sectoral committees.

These bodies recommend to the government and industries which occupational skills are required in the future and (supply chain) sectors with the most potential for decent jobs. Other national trade union centres, such as the Congress of South Africa Trade Unions (COSATU), together with the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) use their participation in the Presidential Commission on Climate Change (PCCC) to negotiate more public/private investments into domestic skills development in the Just Energy Transition Plan-IP (JET).

In Ghana, TUC takes a sector-based approach by using its affiliated teachers' union, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), to represent the trade union movement in their consultations with the Ministries of Education and Technical Vocational and Education Training. Teachers' unions in Ghana are recognized and use their mandate at both the TVET and Council for Technical, Vocational Education Training (COTVET) boards.

3. Negotiations with employers

There are many cases where sectoral unions use collective bargaining as a platform to negotiate for more vocational reskilling of the labour force paid by employers. This approach is seen as a low-hanging fruit and an easier avenue since skills development is often a non-conflictual topic that is easier to negotiate with employers. Industrial unions often adopt a consultative approach to employers during bipartite consultations because trade unions must cooperate with employers, and information on future disruptive technologies is normally not readily available to trade unions.

Examples from Kenya, Nepal, Malawi, and South Africa show trade union leaders prioritize technical vocational education and training (TVET) as part of redeployment and job creation strategies to upskill its low- and medium-skilled members to operate climate-friendly- or efficient-renewable energy technologies. This local bargaining approach provides union organizations and their members with vocational on-the-job training programmes to create employment opportunities and equip them with the latest trends and innovations. By leveraging their expertise and experience, union members contribute to the transition towards a greener and sustainable energy landscape. They are often the innovators and green experts on the factory floors.

Another strategy is the sectoral approach whereby transport unions like TAWU (or even national trade union centres such as GEFONT in Nepal) put pressure on line ministries and authorities to defend and promote skills development for (Matatu) drivers to become e-bus drivers or e-tricycles. Similarly, civil servants' unions in Colombia seek to influence their respective line ministries informally.

4. Short vocational courses for informal economy (climate resilience)

In countries with high levels of informality, there are examples where trade unions are left with no other option but to provide short vocational training to their members to adapt to climate changes and contribute to decarbonization while creating a cleaner environment and more decent jobs.

For instance, in Nepal, Kenya, and some countries in West Africa, trade unions provide short-term and practical vocational training to their members to skill and formalize them as a means to transition them into formalized jobs, i.e., public transport infrastructure as a result of the mass-introduction of electric vehicles. Similarly, SLLC in Sierra Leone organizes and up-skills waste collectors with information and communications technologies, mobile apps and occupational safety and health to improve waste management and campaigns against waste dumping in cities.

The Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) has adopted a strategy to train younger female and casualized construction workers to conduct environment-friendly house construction and improve their economic resilience. Short vocational courses contributed to cushioning them from economic shocks to their livelihood.

To increase their social mobility, the short courses were certified by the regulatory body “Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority” (TEVETA) and institutionalized country-wide to target workers who cannot afford or have time to attend full-time year long courses. The strategy is to push for public rather than private financing of the up-skilling of women and girls.

Lessons learned: Skills development

More than ever, trade unions need to put green skills development more central in its overall strategies and roadmaps. Trade unions should prioritize lobbying governments to increase public financing and modernize tripartite and sectoral TVET governance to boost vocational training institutions, teachers’ competencies, equipment, and green curricula to provide affordable, shorter, and more practical demand-led vocational courses. Across countries, the message is the same: There are not enough technically skilled workers to lift the green transition.

When negotiating skills development for retrenched workers in out-phasing industries, it’s vital to tread carefully. Job misalignments may lead to transitions to other sectors, supply chains, or even countries. Trade unions must weigh the trade-offs in solidarity with peers associated with these new ‘repurposed’ jobs. It’s not just about avoiding unemployment; future intra-union conflicts about ‘repurposed’ members may necessitate serious consultations between different trade unions.

Trade unions must carefully set up expectations during bargaining with employers about on-the-job training and apprenticeships that may have successfully been negotiated at the expense of other benefits. Skills development and green transition (i.e., energy efficiency, cost-savings, etc.) are conflict-neutral topics where both parties can find common grounds (job security vs. productivity) in cases of skeptical and anti-union employers. The strategy is to convince employers of the joint interests in skills development.

Trade unions must track up-skilled workers and ensure they are not re-located to low-carbon industries and exposed to casualization, non-organised, social dumping and indecent work with low pay without health care coverage, benefits and pension.

► 4. Social protection

(a) Social protection and a just transition

Trade unions are crucial in advocating for social justice, equality, and decent work alongside ambitious climate and environmental actions. To adapt, workers often need higher social protection coverage to address the injustices they face. Over 50% of people worldwide lack adequate social protection.⁸ Social justice in the context of the green transition is key for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. They are disproportionately affected and must be covered.



This is why trade unions increasingly prioritize social protection in a just transition. Trade unions are fighting for solid social protection floors for workers whose jobs are at risk. They push back against insufficient social protection, highlighting the inequalities and challenges faced by vulnerable workers, low-skilled individuals, and those in precarious employment. By prioritizing social protection, trade unions aim to facilitate a just transition and ensure workers are supported through changing job landscapes and environmental shifts.

In Africa, in particular, the importance of social protection has been reinforced, especially in helping workers navigate job transitions and cushioning the effects of the green transition. Social protection measures are seen as essential for preventing social unrest and extreme poverty and ensuring that gains in poverty reduction are not reversed. Recognizing the significance of social protection, UNFCCC under COP28 recommended increased financing and multi-sectoral collaboration. They also recommended mitigation and adaptation targets into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)⁹ or National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

⁸ World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social protection at the crossroads – in pursuit of a better future.

⁹ The NDCs are self-defined national plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate impacts.

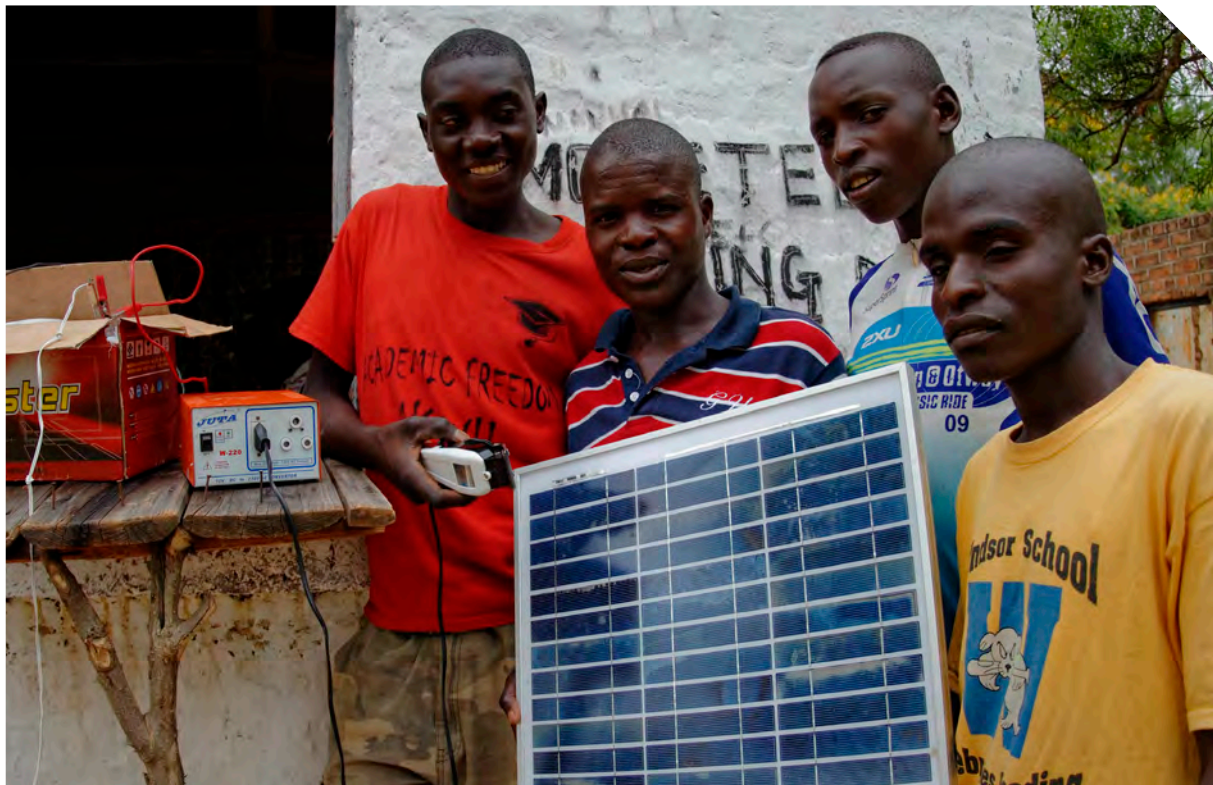
The following approaches demonstrate how national trade union centres adopt various strategies to cushion the impacts of climate changes on their members.

(b) Safety nets for vulnerable people

Social protection schemes are crucial for meeting immediate needs and securing rights for vulnerable populations. They offer financial stability, allowing individuals to make sustainable decisions, invest in technologies (including start-ups), and adapt to changing job markets. Ensuring access to social protection becomes even more critical in African sub-regions where informal economies prevail, and the youth workforce is dominant.

Trade unions employ various strategies to advocate for improved social protection, including pushing governments to increase public financing and expand coverage to include workers from the informal economy. Initiatives such as private social protection schemes with flexible contributions also provide additional support to marginalized low-skilled and casualized workers who adapt and transition to environmentally sustainable economies.¹⁰

One notable – and most prevalent – strategy by National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) in Uganda demonstrates how national governments can be pressurized to finance social protection publicly. Through its representation in the tripartite board of the voluntary National Social Security Fund (NSSF), NOTU lobbied for public expansion to include voluntary contributions from, for example, casualized informal economy and unemployed workers.



Similar approaches are also evident in Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, where trade unions use their tripartite mandate to lobby governments to carry the financial burden for universal social protection and safety nets. Their lobbying seeks – in advance – to mitigate and cushion the likely unequal impacts on informalized, casualized, and unemployed workers.

¹⁰ <https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Mapping-of-the-role-of-trade-unions-on-social-protection-schemes-2023-1.pdf>

However, this expansion strategy for informal economy workers often presupposes a large numerical strength and political leverage from organized informal economy workers, as in the case of Ghana and Sierra Leone. For example, about ten years ago, the SLLC intensified its organizing of workers in the informal economy (about half a million), and today, members can voluntarily contribute to national social protection schemes. In the case of Ghana, the TUC established a private social security scheme (Peoples Pension Trust) with flexible contributions, a package of contingencies/benefits, and a mobile money payment system.

Another illustrative approach is the utilization of sub-regional strategies by national trade union centers in regions such as East Africa where the portability of social protection becomes acute when climate changes force workers to migrate across borders. Through the East African Trade Union Confederation (EATUC), the national trade union centers lobby the East African Community (EAC) to advocate for high social protection standards across borders. By engaging in negotiations and collaboration, EATUC works to ensure better coordination of social protection among member states, which ultimately benefits over two million union members and aids in adapting to climate changes and unemployment within the region.

(c) Collective bargaining with employers

Through collective bargaining processes, trade unions work to enhance social protection benefits for workers, negotiate better terms for job redundancies, and push for just transition preparedness in various sectors. By engaging public and private employers, they drive improvements in social protection schemes and collective bargaining in workplaces.

Sectoral unions use the collective bargaining process to review benefits for job redundancies, putting pressure on private companies to budget for social protection, pension, and special severance packages with just transition preparedness for staff who may need not be redeployed.

Sectoral trade unions often adopt a sector-based approach in their interactions with private and public employers through collective bargaining. In most countries, national trade union centres like COTU-K and COSATU adopt a dual-track strategy: they lobby their governments for improved national social protection schemes while their affiliated sectoral unions simultaneously engage in local collective bargaining to enhance employer contributions for better benefits like gratuities, provident funds, and medical and insurance schemes for permanent workers.

An example from South Africa involving the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) highlights the challenges faced in convincing employers, mainly those resistant to unions, to implement robust social protection programmes for all coal workers (including sub-contracted or non-permanent workers) amid the pressure to meet carbon emission targets. Similar unions organizing the energy sectors prioritize social protection due to the increasing job misalignments (temporal, spatial, sectoral, and educational) taking place in closure processes of high-emitting and hard-to-abate industries.

However, there are trade-offs in some developing countries involving sectoral trade unions. For example, private bargaining processes may, in fact, detract public attention away from negotiations for increased public-financed national social protection schemes. This can undermine the sustained public support required to transition to low-carbon societies. This is primarily a paradox in impoverished regions with high degrees of informality (agriculture, pastoralism, and tourism) and that face adverse effects of sea level rises and irregular heat, flooding, and droughts.

Lessons learned: Social protection

The trade union movement uses a two-track strategy: national trade union centres primarily lobby governments for better national social protection schemes. Meanwhile, sectoral trade unions use local collective bargaining processes to increase employers' contributions to better employee benefits – especially where relatively high levels of union density exist.

Where union density in the formal economy is in sharp decline and in highly informalized economies, national trade union centres use their bargaining power (and tripartite mandate) strategically by lobbying national governments to take responsibility for social justice through expanded and publicly-financed social protection arrangements to ensure a just transition. This mandate is key when protecting poor, female, low-skilled workers, including in the informal economy, from being disproportionately affected by environmental impacts.

Ideally, workers in the informal economy and unemployed persons should not be expected to shoulder the burden of protection on their own. Therefore, trade unions also establish private and voluntary pension fund schemes as alternatives to national policy, legal, and institutional frameworks for social protection funds that cannot cover their (informal economy) members' social protection needs.

Trade unions face significant challenges in their mission to ensure a just transition. They encourage governments and employers to bridge temporal, spatial, educational, or sectoral misalignments in the labour markets. This requires hard decisions and difficult trade-offs, particularly in closure processes in high-carbon industries and/or negotiations on social packages on behalf of all workers, including non-permanent or outsourced workers. Internal union conversations about checks and balances are necessary to ensure a beneficial effect of solidarity between workers in the formal economy and workers with non-permanent contracts.

The focus on social protection in just transition is not just a strategy but also an important organizing tool for trade unions. By communicating more strategically the successes obtained in negotiating with employers and governments to provide social protection schemes and packages to workers, trade unions can demonstrate the tangible benefits of membership.

They can show that ambitious climate and environmental actions can only go hand in hand with social justice and social protection for all workers. Through this, trade unions can renew public interest in the trade union movement and attract potentially large numbers of excluded, informalized, or non-unionized workers and youth to trade unions.



► 5. Social dialogue and negotiations

(a) The global infrastructure of the trade union movement

Across the world, trade unions stand at a critical juncture in negotiating and advocating for a just transition to become an established part of the international climate discourse. Just transition is at the core of the trade union movement's future and should be key in strategic plans and road maps of most trade unions, especially in high-emitting sectors. Here, trade unions in the worst affected sectors and communities are forced to balance the trade-offs associated with their members' immediate 'bread and butter' needs and closing of –or reducing– carbon-intensive industries and sectors.

Trade unions have strategically rethought their approach to collectively utilizing political leverage to optimize their negotiations with governments and employers. This means that trade unions have taken a proactive and strategic approach to using their collective political influence.

Through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), representing 191 million members from 337 affiliates in over 167 countries and territories worldwide, workers form part of a global trade union movement with distinct organizations and structures. This also provides a unique, large, and often underestimated global economies of scale. In addition, global union federations (GUFs) represent members in sectors such as education, industry, construction, domestic work, journalism, transport, food and agriculture, public services, etc. The counterpart to the international trade union movement is the International Organization of Employers (IOE), which represents 50 million companies in 142 countries. Trade unions and employers have often entered a strategic alliance to remind governments that they—as social partners—are key actors in building a climate-resilient future.



(b) Different levels of social dialogue to promote a just transition

In negotiations with government and employers, trade unions often adopt diverse strategies ranging from reactive and pro-active approaches that protect the status quo to supportive approaches that advance just transition without jeopardizing decent wages, working conditions, and corporative competitiveness. Through these approaches, trade unions often use their political leverage and numerical muscles in adversarial and non-compromising negotiations with governments and employers to exert disproportionate influence to raise the agenda of a just transition.

In critical negotiations with governments and employers, sectoral trade unions often adopt a proactive and technical approach that draws on specialized frontline union members as experts with the know-how to develop, maintain, and innovate new and cleaner de-carbonizing and environment-friendly (e.g., water sanitation) technologies, energy optimize environmental-friendly work processes and skills to keep companies competitive productive and decent.

Inputs from specialized sector-skilled workers often support bargaining processes, whether they specialize in developing, installing, or operating technologies like charging stations and batteries, building wind turbines, purifying water, or renovating buildings. This contributes to trade unions increasingly being acknowledged as key players in climate change negotiations with governments and employers.

In recent years, trade unions have increased their influence by utilizing their negotiating powers and representation in incremental or fully cooperative approaches at all levels: global, regional, national, workplace, and community. These platforms of influence demonstrate how the trade union movement, through its multiplicity of approaches, often brings technical expertise to consolidate and validate data in climate change negotiations with corporations, states, environmental organizations, and affected communities.

Global union federations such as ITF, IndustriALL, and PSI have successfully negotiated with multinational corporations and governments to build up bipartite and tripartite social dialogue and consultation mechanisms. Examples show how global union federations share their specialized sectoral expertise and just transition experiences to be used by other like-minded and less experienced trade unions in diverse countries and sectors. For example, lessons learned from Uganda, Colombia, Nigeria, and South Africa have been transferred by ITF to transport union negotiators in Nepal and Kenya to support their negotiations for drivers to be upskilled and redeployed by transport infrastructure authorities.

Similarly, global framework agreements have set up social dialogue mechanisms between IndustriALL and high-emitting multinational oil, gas, and coal companies like ENGIE, EDF, and Anglo American. Such agreements illustrate how the comparative advantages of industrial unions and their global unions can commit large multinational companies to enforce a just transition with decent work and environmental integrity, thereby encouraging decarbonization in fast-growing global supply chains (especially in hard-to-abate sectors with high emissions).

Once agreed upon, such agreements or consultative mechanisms are also key platforms to discuss international labour standards and IRMA, CDRs, dispute resolution, due diligence, industry 4.0, and international carbon border taxes and leakages (CBAM, ESG, etc.) on domestic and hard-to-abate industries in the South.

Further, global trickle-down effects on national circumstances may assist trade unions in national or local collective bargaining processes by referring to global framework agreements.

Such trickle-down effects often benefit union negotiators against anti-union and skeptical companies and supply-chain enterprises in climate-vulnerable countries that delay or deliberately obstruct existing collective bargaining. The consequences are that target-setting and responsible business initiatives seldom produce enough results.

National trade union centres play a primary role in important climate change negotiations and policy developments, and proactively use policy research, projections, proposals, political advocacy and collective mobilization to influence ministers and public decision-makers, employers, and other stakeholders. National trade union centres have, in recent years, prioritized national policy meetings on climate change.

Here, effective social dialogue, cooperation, and consensus-seeking bargaining between trade union negotiators, public decision-makers, and employers have proved indispensable in incorporating just transition into the regular industrial relations mechanisms—except in conflictual and authoritarian countries devoid of social dialogue.

Most national trade union centres enjoy the comparative advantage as legal and formal constituents in social dialogue mechanisms, including in bipartite and tripartite collective bargaining. National trade union centres use these business-as-usual platforms of influence and coordinate different inter-union and sectoral positions (to de-carbonization). They draw on technical know-how on green technologies and other sectoral union expertise (ranging from water sanitation and purification systems, pesticides in farming, construction, steel and iron supply materials to digitalization).

Contentious debates on general framework conditions that have key impact on company competitiveness, productivity and employment take place in consultations between workers and employers and government. For instance, climate policy processes and negotiations about, for example, carbon taxing and leakages, climate legislation, emission reduction targets, renewable energy, and mitigation policies versus quality of work, employment, and skills development.

In many countries, national trade union confederations exert their political influence through their institutional positions in tripartite labour boards and councils, relevant national ministries, TVET authorities, and permanent roundtables. For instance, Ghanaian trade unions pressurize their government to formulate a national green jobs strategy on policy coordination, capacity building, skills for green jobs, green enterprises, and sustainable financing.

In South Africa, COSATU and NUM successfully referred the national just energy transition plan (JET) to the tripartite mechanism, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), for multi-stakeholder consultations to create public support for just transition. According to NUM, its government will have forfeited its developmental state responsibility if public renewable energy plans are left unresolved.

In the cases of Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, trade unions push to have just transition firmly embedded in many of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national climate change councils, climate change task forces, commissions, and climate acts and action plans.

Through their consultative status, trade unions aim to build up joint understanding and interests with representatives from government, employers, and multi-stakeholders (including environmental NGOs and communities) as part of their coalition and alliance strategy. In Nepal, GEFONT convinced the National Planning Commission and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to include just transition for the first time.

In Sierra Leone, the SLLC consults bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency to advise on issues including decent work in waste management. In Kenya and South Africa, trade unions adopt incremental approaches because governments are reluctant to include trade union positions on the need for comprehensive development measures and plans to avoid job losses and reduce fossil-fuel emissions.

Except for COSATU's (and NUM's) participation in the multi-stakeholder presidential climate change commission in South Africa, the absence of trade unions in climate councils is critical. This should be a high priority to union leaders—especially since ITUC has observer status in the UNFCCC negotiations.

More national trade union centres intensify their technical assistance and policy advice to their affiliated member organizations. Especially small and less-experienced trade unions get systematic advice on climate policy developments, including technical, social, and employment matters. The strategy strengthens the resilience of smaller affiliated unions to stand against the impacts on employment and competitiveness in their respective sectors. Larger affiliated industrial unions in particular are often competent on just transition within their own sector(s).

At sectoral levels, trade unions pick some of the 'low-hanging fruits' by utilizing their institutional, sectoral mandates and direct negotiations with line ministries and authorities (e.g. transport, education, industry, energy, and agriculture). Most case studies illustrate this approach, as demonstrated by branch leaders from the Ghana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) that referred the affected communities to the respective agricultural authority for compensation, after an extreme situation of flooding. Similarly, the Colombian union USE used its civil service members to work as climate justice advocates within line ministries and brought to the attention of the national ministry a range of climate challenges facing rural communities.

These strategic avenues illustrate a marked shift in thinking. In all cases, environmental and labour priorities are increasingly based on shared interests and transitional approaches to cooperating with corporations (and states) at the negotiating tables.



Trade unions are increasingly moving away from sceptical and defensive positions fearing weakened membership towards more proactive union negotiations and lobbying of policymaking, e.g., stringent mitigation commitments and targets.

(c) Negotiations in the workplaces

Trade unions and their bargaining parties increasingly use collective bargaining processes as a foundation for agreeing on a just transition. Trade unions also push for more detailed and committing climate change-related clauses in collective bargaining. Collective bargaining processes have seen innovative agreements, especially because few company workplace policies and/or CSR initiatives are sustainable.

Most trade unions, therefore, adopt a transitional approach to negotiate social justice through collective bargaining to provide supportive measures such as skilling/retraining, job-to-job transitions, job and income security, developing alternative employment, sick leave, and a healthy and safe work environment (committees). These are key preconditions for a successful and cost-efficient just transition.

The risk of skills mismatch and lack of skilled labour to lift the green transition has long been a concern. In this regard, industrial unions have intensified their bargaining processes to promote reskilling and employee-driven innovation to support the transformation of energy facilities. Local union negotiators refer to agreed global sectoral agreements on climate change and use them as non-conflictual measures to commence local bargaining and industrial relations.

However, in Kenya and South Africa, this primarily benefited formal workers, but not outsourced and non-contractual workers (often from local communities). For example, while the Kenya Electricity Generating Company PLC (KenGen) subsequently earned substantial carbon credits from UNFCCC, the reality on the ground in other high-emitting sectors is often characterized by delaying tactics by sceptical companies.

It is key that sectoral trade unions utilize their representation in local company boards and committees on occupational safety and health or employee innovation to negotiate and raise awareness amongst workers and employers about the economic, social, and environmental complexities of a just transition. Here, trade unions provide checks and balances to avoid overburdened local shop stewards and safety representatives and also to be solely responsible for handling just transition.

Undoubtedly, social dialogue is considerably more challenging in sectors with high levels of informality. Trade unions have had to adopt another approach to represent their members' interests when negotiating with local municipalities and authorities.

Trade unions give informal economy workers and local community members a voice in negotiations with municipalities about decent working conditions. Cases with GEFONT, MCTU and SLLC show how national trade union centres (and their respective unions) play key roles in organizing and protecting waste collectors, (e-drivers), construction workers, and others hit hard by the precarious nature of their work and climate challenges.

In the informal economy in Malawi, Nepal, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, national trade union centres demonstrate how they maneuver between low climate change resilience and high rates of informal employment, underscoring the urgency of simultaneously addressing both challenges.



(d) Union-community alliances

In communities disproportionately impacted by climate change, environmental degradation, and mitigation measures, trade unions and communities form alliances that have gained ground in addressing climate change debates in recent years. The global union PSI has established a union community alliance where trade unions and local impoverished communities reliant on fossil fuel-based industries collaborate to make the costs of decarbonization more bearable.

Colombian public sector unions use the same coalition approach to form alliances with communities and water cooperatives near the state-owned water facility and in this way expand their political leverage. They use collective bargaining to convince representatives of a state-owned water facility to provide funds to protect water sources from contamination and purification costs. The approach goes far beyond securing better pay and improved working conditions. It also includes climate change adaptation due to droughts and chemical pollution from mines.

Examples from Ghana, Nepal, and South Africa illustrate the potentially explosive consequences of a socially unjust transition if impoverished communities with high unemployment and low-income levels are not defended or represented in negotiations with local and national governments.

The case of NUM particularly demonstrates a complex and contentious challenge with government plans to close high-emitting (coal power) plants without guarantees for alternative livelihoods and decent jobs for coal miners. Repurposing and/or re-deploying workers to other coal plants or renewable energy facilities are not priorities, whilst governmental energy plans have gaps in job security.

Thus, the coalition strategy focuses on (a) preserving the livelihoods of dependents and the whole economic ecosystem in communities and (b) ensuring that affected communities are not placed far away. With mining communities more than 3–4 times larger than the local mining workforce, physical relocations are a key contentious issue for governments when phasing out high-emitting industries.

While entering into union–community alliances is an opportunity for trade unions to gain substantial numerical strength, political leverage and public community support, it comes with increased expectations and a greater expectation of delivering the benefits and services expected from community members.

Lessons learned: Skills development

The global trade union movement should expand its global infrastructures, institutional mandates and numerical strengths to consolidate political leverage.

National trade union confederations stand at a crossroads with competing negotiation priorities of ensuring workers' economic security versus climate justice and environmental sustainability. Trade union leaders from national trade union centres should discuss internally how to coordinate trade union positions on decarbonization measures and targets that may potentially introduce internal conflicts. Thus, one option is to weigh up differing positions against each other to strike delicate balances. Particularly, energy justice for all (to access affordable energy) must be balanced against climate justice with cleaner energies.

In addition to traditional collective bargaining efforts for better working conditions and wages, national trade union confederations and sectoral unions must strategically rethink and expand their negotiation demands and membership services with more practical just transition benefits and climate actions.

Trade unions must seek institutional presence in national tripartite and multi-stakeholder negotiations with governments on issues such as climate change and environmental plans. Such national climate change councils or commissions often fall under other line ministries unfamiliar with social dialogue and tripartism.

Trade unions venture into union-community alliances and represent affected communities in negotiations with local and national governments. It comes with increased expectations to deliver benefits and services. Trade unions need to balance their representation of community interests, for example, in decarbonization investments and fossil fuel reduction plans. Trade unions must also

provide short-term solutions such as re-employment, up-skilling and/or relocation to avoid losing jobs and incomes. Re-location of communities is a highly contentious dilemma for all parties. In such cases, trade unions may have to accept decarbonization compromises and solutions by employers while guarding their community-wide coalitions and public support.

In-house union experts and global best practices from global unions on green transition and advanced technologies can help boost the negotiation powers of trade unions at all levels. Similarly, it is pivotal for trade unions to be able to meet high expectations from local branch leaders, shop stewards, and safety representatives to be trained to negotiate and enforce just transition. Also, trade unions need to support the competitiveness of public/private industries as a means to protect jobs. Understanding the complexities associated with employment implications of carbon leakages, taxes and other regulations of high-emitting companies is key.



► 6. International collaboration and advocacy

(a) Trade union approaches to international lobbying

In an era dominated by an urgent need to address climate change, international collaboration has become essential between various stakeholders. One such collaboration is between trade unions and climate change (civil society) organizations.

These groups join forces and leverage their collective power to advocate for a just transition and social justice toward a sustainable and equitable future. Involvement of trade unions alongside other non-state actors and other progressive groups in policy-making and national decision-making processes are among the recurrent themes in advocacy initiatives at all levels: local, sectoral, national and international.

Internationally, trade unions are today increasingly active in lobbying international climate policy processes. As a direct response, the ITUC, in close collaboration with its regional organizations like ITUC–Africa, has adopted strategic approaches and actions towards building consensus to ensure a just transition. These efforts culminated when integrating “Just Transition” in the preamble of the landmark and legally binding Paris Agreement, 2015 and, more recently, in developing the Work Programme on Just Transition under UNFCCC.

More specifically, at the global level, the ITUC is active in the trade union group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. ITUC works actively with its affiliates and global unions to systematically position the labour movement on the need for a fair, ambitious, and binding agreement in the UNFCCC on emission reduction targets, differentiated responsibilities, and financial climate policies, among others. The strategic approach of ITUC underlines a “just transition” for workers and communities to ensure that all are part of a sustainable, low-carbon economy and benefit from decent and green jobs. Systematic advocacy efforts in coalition with stakeholders are instrumental in raising decent work issues in international climate processes to support the alignment of references and definitions with the ILO Guidelines for a just transition.

To illustrate, ITUC was a strong driver at COP28 in 2023 and advocated for the global stocktake (GST) to recognize the need for a just transition away from fossil fuels. The Just Transition Work Programme included labour rights and social protection, and the Loss and Damage fund was formed. Another example is how ITUC, in a strategic alliance with the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), put pressure on governments under COP28 not to dilute employment but endorse Just Transition as a central reference for policy making for just transition as agreed at the ILO conference in June 2023.¹¹

In 2024, ITUC and global unions adopted a joint approach to pushing governments to modernize the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to continue promoting international trade while ensuring a just transition to a zero-carbon economy with labour rights and collective bargaining for resilient supply chains and energy-efficient and sustainable domestic production.

On the other hand, climate change organizations focus on raising awareness, research, and policy advocacy related to the environment. They aim to mitigate the impacts of climate change and promote sustainable practices globally. Recognizing that workers’ rights and social equality are crucial aspects of environmental justice, these organizations strive to include and collaborate with trade unions for a holistic approach to climate action.

¹¹ <https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-ioe-statement-cop28-en?lang=en>

Regionally, the ITUC–Africa has advanced its policy advocacy through strategic partnerships with the African Union and formed broad-based movements and coalitions with progressive organizations and actors in academia, media, and community groups. One such coalition is the Just Transition Platform (JTP) that emerged from the COP26 in Glasgow, with convenors being ITUC–Africa, Climate Works Foundation, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. JTP brings together over 15 organizations working on climate and a just transition in Africa.



Given the strong sectoral dimension of the transition, trade unions pursue sector-specific initiatives worldwide. As listed previously, approaches include assessments and knowledge development, advocacy efforts, sectoral strategies, sectoral and enterprise-level agreements, and support services complemented by international experience-sharing.

To illustrate a sector approach to international advocacy, at COP26, trade union negotiators actively addressed the contentious issue of financing and incentivizing the decarbonizing of coal industries. The result was a \$8.5 billion pledge to South Africa to phase out coal mining. However, with South African mining corporations earning similar amounts in coal revenues per year, this commitment was not enough, and negotiations for climate financing, carbon footprint, and loss and damages continued in 2023.

The need to decarbonize the transport sector and improve its sustainability is becoming increasingly apparent, especially in the maritime industry, which employs almost 2 million seafarers and transports nearly 90% of global trade. At COP26, the International Chamber of Shipping, the International Transport Workers' Federation, and the UN Global Compact joined forces to establish the Just Transition Maritime Task Force, aiming at driving maritime decarbonization while supporting a just transition for the maritime workforce.

Other active sectors include education, public services, the construction sector in the European Union (EU), sustainable agriculture in the EU, Ghana, and Malawi, and textiles in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam. Trade unions are also important in international knowledge development and capacity building. The ITUC has established a Just Transition Centre to provide trade unions with guidance materials, training, and technical support on their engagement in plans, policies, and campaigns on a just transition.¹²

¹² ILC 2023, p44-46.

Global labour movement demands for climate change:

- Decide on a Just Transition Work Programme to discuss pathways to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and measures that offer the international normative framework for a just transition
- Guarantee human rights, labour rights and inclusive participation
- Adaptation needs social protection systems
- Climate finance

(b) Common grounds between trade unions and climate change organizations

International collaboration between trade unions and climate change organizations is pivotal in shaping policies and promoting a just transition. While trade unions bring the voices of workers and their expertise in labour issues to the table, climate change organizations offer scientific knowledge and environmental policy experiences. Together, they aim to achieve a transition that is fair and minimizes the negative impacts on workers and communities.

To effectively lobby internationally and domestically for a just transition, trade unions and climate change organizations use several strategies such as collaborative research and advocacy (just transition challenges), capacity building (on TVET skills and new technologies to both trade unions and climate change organizations), representation on policy-making and decision-making processes on climate changes, as well as solidarity movements (trade unions and climate change organizations collaboration on solidarity and social movements amplifying workers with a stronger collective voice).

The dilemma of international collaboration on climate change between workers' organizations and other institutions reflects differing perspectives on the impacts of environmental policies and a just transition to renewable energy. Trade unions often prioritize protecting workers' rights, job security, and fair labour practices, especially in industries that may be affected by climate action, such as coal mining, manufacturing, and transportation. On the other hand, environmental organizations and policymakers aim to mitigate climate change by transitioning to sustainable energy sources, reducing carbon emissions, and promoting low-emitting initiatives with environmental integrity.

This divide presents a dilemma, as trade unions, on the one hand, are concerned about potential job losses and economic disruptions resulting from transitioning away from carbon-intensive industries, while environmental organizations, on the other hand, emphasize urgent climate action and the need for a swift shift toward renewable energy and low-carbon technologies.

However, it is important to note that these perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Efforts to address the dilemma can involve finding common ground and accepting trade-offs in the pursuit of a balance between environmental objectives and the well-being of workers and affected communities.

This involves provisions for vocational technical retraining and transition assistance for workers in carbon-intensive industries, investing in green jobs and sustainable initiatives, and fostering dialogue between trade unions, environmental groups, and policymakers to develop inclusive pathways toward a more sustainable future.

Lessons learned and challenges for trade unions: International collaboration

Challenge 1:

In light of fast-evolving workers' needs and fast-paced changes in economies and labour markets, it is key to enhance institutional and technical capacities of trade unions relevant to their needs and for governments to promote the creation and formalization of dialogue mechanisms and structures at all levels.

Challenge 2:

Other non-state actors have undertaken initiatives on a just transition that contribute to advancing and scaling up action. Trade unions must find ways of incorporating the concerns of these groups (such as indigenous people, youth, and women groups) currently excluded from discussions of policy priorities.

Challenge 3:

Speaking with one voice at national and international levels without the dichotomy or divide between unions from the Global South and those from the Global North.

Challenge 4:

There is no international labour standard to guide the world of work on a just transition.

Failures at the ILO in securing an agenda item on standard setting on climate change despite pressure from the Workers' Group.

Challenge 5:

Given the breadth and complexity of the issues and evolving needs, global knowledge gaps and unmet needs require systematic and in-depth research on the nexus between environment and decent work in key sectors and themes such as energy, transport, agriculture and food systems, forestry, circular economy, technological development and transfer, economic diversification, and aspects of loss and damage and climate financing. It is key to update knowledge on policy measures relevant to a just transition to extract lessons learned through projections, policy reviews, studies and impact evaluations.¹³

International collaboration between trade unions and climate change organizations is instrumental in advocating for a just transition. By bringing together expertise from both sides, this nuanced partnership approach strengthens the fight for equitable working conditions and workers' concerns for job opportunities with environmental integrity and imperatives. Through lobbying, advocacy, and capacity building, this collaboration sets a solid foundation for a sustainable and socially just future.

13 ILO 2023 para 182, p52.

► 7. Disruptive technologies

Technology is important in contributing to climate change and providing solutions to mitigate its effects. On the one hand, industrial processes, transportation, and energy generation technologies have historically been significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, advanced clean energy technologies, such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power, along with energy-efficient solutions and sustainable practices, are today at the forefront of the international climate change debate with their solutions to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. The emergence of new climate-friendly technologies like carbon capture and storage, digitalization and Industry 4.0, battery storage, sustainable agriculture techniques, and climate modeling tools partly address climate change challenges.

These technologies are still contested terrain in the conversations between trade unions and employers, so getting consensus on how to adopt and deploy them responsibly is critical for combating climate change and fostering a more sustainable future with new decent jobs and better working conditions.

Trade unions often have various views on disruptive technologies in the context of climate change and the concept of a just transition. Trade unions have advocated for measures that support a just transition to a low-carbon economy, including retraining and job security for workers in high-emitting industries. At the same time, clean and green technologies are invented to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency while also creating new job opportunities—especially in emerging green industries.

However, since disruptive technologies are ambivalent, they also require careful consideration of the impact on existing workers. In light of recent IMF findings that new digital technologies are likely to worsen inequality and create social tensions,¹⁴ government policymakers and private industry leaders need to engage with trade unions to ensure that disruptive technologies and related policies support affected workers and communities.

In this regard, trade unions have a range of perspectives on the intersection of disruptive technologies, job security and climate action. Some unions view technology advances as valuable tools to advance climate action, enabling the development of renewable energy sources, energy-efficient infrastructure, and sustainable transportation.

International forecasts note that these technologies create new job opportunities and contribute to a more sustainable economy. Some of the cases illustrate how experienced union members are at the forefront in identifying potential strategies for reducing emissions, inventing new business models, and rethinking production processes in companies.

However, other trade unions are concerned about the potential impact of technological advancements on existing jobs and labour conditions. They struggle to identify the huge net jobs often projected and advocate for measures to ensure that workers are not left behind in the green transition and that new jobs created by technology are accessible and equitable.

Most industrial trade union approaches to disruptive technologies are premised on the need for a strong link to a social dimension. While they demonstrate an acceptance of possible job gains, they also fight against the increasing precarious work (temporary, part-time, casual, irregular, non-contractual, piece-work etc.) and social dumping currently taking place.

Ultimately, the views of trade unions on disruptive technologies in climate action can vary, and the trade union movement needs to consider its diverse perspectives when shaping policies and initiatives related to technology and environmental sustainability.

14 <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2024/01/14/ai-will-transform-the-global-economy-lets-make-sure-it-benefits-humanity>



A few examples of different approaches of trade unions are:

- 1. Embracing new job opportunities:** The electrical union KETAWU in collaboration with the KenGen has realized that disruptive technologies, such as renewable energy innovations and sustainable infrastructure can create new, well-paying jobs. To do this, KETAWU bargains for upskilling and retraining programmes to equip workers to join the transition to these new roles. KETAWU adopts a pro-active strategy to support policies that promote job creation in the transition from high to low- emitting industries. To illustrate how its union members are at the frontline of innovating new clean electric technologies in Kenya, its senior and experienced union members participate in bipartite innovation employee committees and co-develop future energy technologies (e.g. charging and payment technologies to e-vehicles).
- 2. Concerns about job losses:** On the other hand, the mine-workers union NUM in the South African energy and coal sectors are skeptical about potential job displacement and re-purposing caused by the adoption of disruptive technologies. NUM has reservations about the enthusiastic notion that there will be no job losses for workers in the coal energy generation value chain during the transition. They project a bulk of short-term construction jobs with only a few long-term jobs in operations and maintenance. Therefore, NUM emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights and livelihoods of workers (and communities) in affected industries and advocates for government policies that ensure a fair transition for impacted workers. The outcome of closing and repurposing Komati Coal Power Station confirmed NUM's fears that not all livelihoods depending on the power station could be secured with the closing down of the plant, and not all jobs could be retained.
- 3. Advancing environmental goals:** Other trade unions prioritize the need for technological innovation to address climate change while ensuring that the transition is fair for workers. Such unions support measures that promote sustainability but also advocate for social protections and job security for workers impacted by the shift away from traditional carbon-intensive industries.

The case of Transport and Allied Workers Union of Kenya (TAWU)

The onset design and construction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in Nairobi prompted TAWU and other unions to seek influence to represent transport workers and the urban communities. With the support of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), the union mobilized and organized workers in the informal public transportation (popularly known as “matatu”) industry.

ITF drew on lessons learned from Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) of Uganda to amend TAWU constitution to organize workers in the matatu industry in setting out modalities on recruitment, payment of membership union dues and adaptation of mobile money technology to contribute to a social protection fund.

TAWU adopts a coalition strategy by building alliances with other transport unions and civil society organizations to consolidate their influence on—and negotiations with national and county policy makers to promote a worker-led formalization that prioritizes just transition and gender equality.

- 4. Collaborative planning:** Many trade unions adopt a proactive and participatory strategy to participate in collaborative planning and decision-making processes that shape a green transition. Using a community-coalition approach, they advocate for environmental policies and programs that prioritize the well-being of workers and their communities.

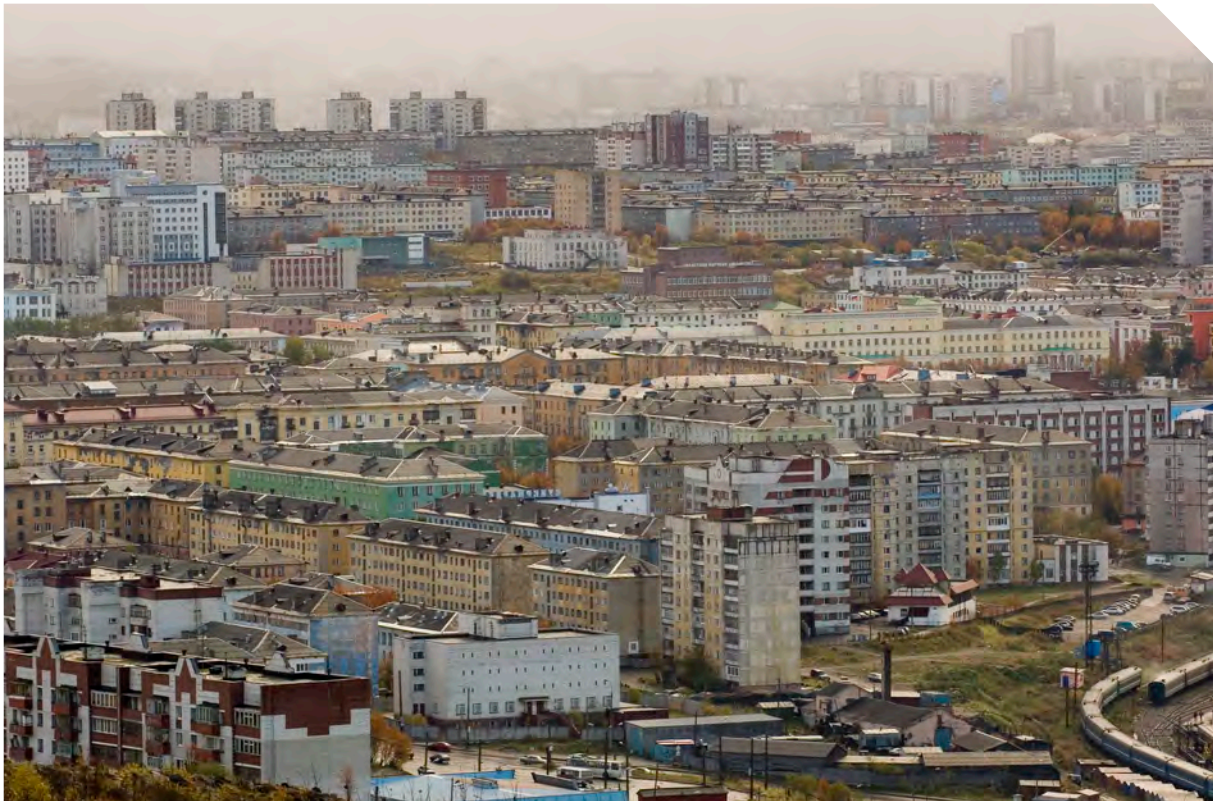


GEFONT women drivers and e-tricycles in Kathmandu

To address the air pollution in Kathmandu, the Government of Nepal banned the old diesel-power tricycles and replaced them with the electric "Safa Tempo" powered by rechargeable batteries.

The General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) organized and represented female tricycle drivers to ensure that they receive decent jobs, wages and working conditions.

Female e-drivers are popular amongst passengers and companies as they are reliable, service-minded, professional and safer.



Lessons learned: Trade unions and technology transfers

Trade unions play a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights and representing their interests when transferring new technologies while at the same time giving the necessary priority to better access to necessary training and skills to operate and maintain new technologies and practices that are sustainable and environmentally friendly.

Trade unions should negotiate with employers to prevent existing workers from being negatively impacted by adopting new climate change mitigation and adaptation technologies. This can involve negotiating job security, up-skilling, fair wages, and safe working conditions when introducing more sustainable technologies.

Through its global infrastructure of global union federations, trade unions work with national governments and industry stakeholders to promote and participate in technology transfers to developing countries while also ensuring that workers benefit from advancements in climate-friendly technologies.

To overcome the dilemma of protecting workers' rights while introducing disruptive technologies, trade unions should contribute to technology transfers with a range of strategies:

- 1. Skills development:** Trade unions advocate for re- and up-skilling programmes to help workers acquire the skills necessary to operate and maintain new technologies (energy-) effectively. A skilled workforce in developing countries adopts and utilizes disruptive technologies to mitigate pollution and high emissions.
- 2. Advocacy for fair technology transfer:** Trade unions promote a transfer of technologies to developing countries that is fair and beneficial to the local workforce. This may involve negotiating with governments, international organizations and private industries to ensure that technological transfers are carried out ethically, resulting in improved working conditions and job opportunities for local workers. Instead of a defensive response, trade unions must remain in negotiations to promote a just transition in transferring disruptive technologies.
- 3. Empowerment of workers:** Trade unions empower workers to participate in decision-making processes related to technology transfers and ensure that disruptive technologies do not negatively impact on job security, wages, or working conditions.
- 4. Collaboration with stakeholders:** Trade unions should utilize their existing collaboration with government agencies, employer's organizations and industries, and other stakeholders to promote inclusion of local workforces, environmental integrity, and decent jobs in technology transfers that support the transition to cleaner, more (energy-) efficient technologies.



► 8. Case studies

Central Organisation of Trade Unions, Kenya (COTU-K) Influencing national and local authorities

The wide-reaching effects of climate change in Kenya are impacting various sectors of the economy, notably agriculture, which employs a significant portion of the population. Changes in climate patterns like reduced rainfall and prolonged droughts have led to lower crop yields, livestock losses, and heightened food insecurity, pushing many small-scale farmers into unemployment or reduced income, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

Climate change also affects industries like tourism, manufacturing, and construction through disrupted activities, damaged infrastructure, and threats to natural resource-dependent sectors like forestry and fisheries. The urgent call for a just transition in Kenya emphasizes a fair and inclusive move towards low-carbon economies, ensuring that the transition is equitable for all, especially vulnerable communities and workers, by providing support for reskilling and upskilling towards green job opportunities, safeguarding workers' rights, decent working conditions, fair wages, and engaging in constructive dialogue to prioritize environmental sustainability and worker well-being.

The Central Organisation of Trade Unions in Kenya (COTU-K) and its affiliates have pushed for a just transition in recent years because the labour market in Kenya is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like droughts and floods characterize Kenyan realities on the ground. Moreover, a just transition entails protecting workers' rights and ensuring decent working conditions, fair wages, and social safety nets. It involves engaging in social dialogue and consultation with workers and their representatives to shape policies and strategies prioritizing environmental sustainability and worker well-being.

By pursuing a just transition, COTU-K addresses the employment challenges posed by climate change while simultaneously contributing to global efforts to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and build a more sustainable future. The holistic approach of COTU-K considers the interplay between environmental, social, and economic dimensions to ensure a fair and equitable transition for all Kenyans, particularly those most affected by the impacts of climate change.

COTU-K uses its institutional and legal position as a social partner to put pressure on the Kenyan government and employers at, for example, the 58th International Labour Day celebration at the Uhuru Gardens, Nairobi, where COTU-K leadership insisted on workers' representation in the national climate change council, which was established under the Kenya Climate Change Act 2016. Also, COTU-K submitted inputs to the Climate Change (Amendment) Bill on 25 May 2023 to include workers in the council.

The pro-workers arguments underline that trade unions represent the interests and concerns of workers from diverse sectors. This includes a trade union representative to ensure that workers' experiences, expertise, and insights directly impacted by climate change and related policies are considered. This is premised on the fact that workers often possess valuable on-the-ground knowledge about the practical implications of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and potential challenges and opportunities. In addition, COTU-K is raising the need for social equity when co-shaping national policies.

Climate change policies and measures can have significant socio-economic implications, including effects on employment, job security, and workers' rights. Trade unions safeguard workers' rights and ensure fair and equitable outcomes. With trade union representatives on the council, social equity concerns (job creation, social protection, re- and up-skilling, livelihoods, and decent work for workers) are considered in climate change decision-making processes.

Also, COTU-K has been pushing for workers' representation in the national climate change council to promote democratic and participatory governance, transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. Including trade unions in the council encourages social dialogue, fostering cooperation between workers, employers, and the government.

Today, COTU-K has strengthened two green representatives trained within each of the 21 affiliated unions. Through this systematic internal capacity-building, COTU-K is building its army of trade unionists well-versed in negotiating all-around CBAs with employers and authorities—producing positive results in affiliates such as KUDHEIHA (domestic workers) and KETAWU (electricians). KETAWU's skilled members are behind Kenya's shift to clean energy and have also negotiated life-long learning (and re-deployment) for retrenched members.

In Kenya, COTU-K has succeeded in putting technical vocational and education training (TVET) on the climate change agenda in tripartite processes, such as the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) and Kenyan National Qualifications Authority (KNAQ).



TVET equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate the changing world of work. COTU-K has successfully promoted continuous learning to ensure its union members' competitiveness and adaptability in a dynamic labour market. To illustrate, COTU-K has adopted a climate change policy and drafted a climate change and just transition training manual for its members. As a result of COTU-K's membership services to its affiliated transport union TAWU, COTU-K defends union members around the Public Transport Programmes (Bus Rapid Transport, BRT) by pressurizing BRT deal makers to get a permanent seat on the NAMATA board.

General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) Promoting women drivers converting from diesel to electric tricycles in Kathmandu

The air pollution in the bowl-shaped Kathmandu Valley, caused by both human and geographical factors, is highly unhealthy for sensitive groups. It is the fastest-growing city in Southeast Asia, with a population of 1.5 million (2022), and one of the most ancient cities in the world. Air pollution and carbon footprints in Kathmandu are nine times the international WHO guidelines.

Against this background, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) collaborates with the municipality of Kathmandu to introduce green transport in efforts to reduce massive CO₂ emissions in the city and country, which have had major consequences for Nepal's glaciers, landslides, biodiversity, welfare, and national economy.

In recent years, Kathmandu adapted to climate changes and introduced a clean and climate-adapted transport infrastructure dominated by electric tricycles (tuk-tuk) that run on hydropower from 6,000 rivers and waterfalls. To reduce the need for imported fossil fuels, a team of technicians and entrepreneurs innovated the non-polluting tricycles to replace the old 'Bikram and Bajaj Tempo' that was found to be one of the major causes of un-sustainably high pollution. The government banned and replaced them with the Electric 'Safa Tempo' powered by rechargeable batteries because electric tricycles contribute to less CO₂ emissions.

GEFONT began systematically organizing and representing female tricycle drivers to ensure they were not left behind and unemployed in the green transition. As a result, the GEFONT has negotiated decent wages and working conditions over the years, including decent working hours (overtime and leave) to balance family/work life and recharge batteries regularly to make them last longer. Particularly, the dual responsibilities of a breadwinner and household keeper have historically prevented women from entering the world of work in Kathmandu. However, with international assistance from, e.g., ILO, GEFONT has, over the years, trained female drivers, protected them from daily harassment and discrimination, and assisted them with driver's licenses to lift them out of poverty and into the world of work with green job incomes.

As a value addition, it has been found that female drivers today are popular amongst passengers and companies due to their reliability, service-mind and professionalism compared to male drivers. They drive shorter distances and fewer hours with slower speeds, which are recipes for longer battery lives and, subsequently, good business.

Intensive lobbying by GEFONT to local authorities has led to over 300 female drivers being licensed by the Nepali transport authorities and certified by the Nepal Electricity Authority NEA (public electricity corporation) to drive electric tricycles. They are part of a fleet of more than 700 electric vehicles that have been plying Kathmandu streets for over 20 years. Today, female drivers forge their livelihoods, improve the environment, and provide low-cost transportation for the Nepalese people.

The conversion from gasoline-powered vehicles to electric has transferred employment to charging stations for mechanics and unskilled youth. While there are no statistics on employment, GEFONT is nevertheless lobbying the Nepalese government through its representation to continue creating sustainable solutions in the national energy, urban, and transport policies to reduce CO₂ emissions country-wide.

After 15 years, some self-employed female tricycle members have today small enterprises or have been permanently employed by, for example, diplomatic missions, NGOs, and foreign embassies in Kathmandu. While some drivers today operate large four-wheel vehicles in public transport, others have entered leading positions in trade unions in their workplaces.

With the intervention of GEFONT, female safa tempo drivers have passed their skills from woman to woman and created catalyzing effects for Kathmandu's first female safa tempo drivers. Through these initiatives, the trade union movement has ensured fair and decent work while Kathmandu transitions to a clean, hydro-powered future.



Regarding national social dialogue and lobbying, GEFONT has successfully put pressure on the National Planning Commission and Ministry Focal Ministry for Climate Change, Forest and Environment to include just transition in their work. Also, for the first time, the national delegation to COP28 included trade union leaders.

In line with this, the multi-ministerial and tripartite body "Central Level Advisory Committee" (CLAC) has endorsed just transition and climate change as key priorities.

Trades Union Congress (Ghana) Trade unions fight environmental degradation

As the leading national trade union centre in Ghana, Trades Union Congress (Ghana TUC) is leading the country's climate change efforts. It is currently developing a comprehensive policy on climate change and just transition. This commitment is outlined in its existing policies, which state that it will collaborate with like-minded organizations on climate change and reducing global warming. Additionally, it will implement measures to mitigate the effects of climate change on workers and communities.

Several unions affiliated with the Ghana TUC actively advocate for a transition to sustainable energy. These include the Public Services Workers Union, Health Services Workers Union, Public Utility Union, the Ghana Mine Workers Union, the Timber and Wood Workers Union, the Ghana Private Road Transport Union, and the General Agricultural Workers Union. This diverse range of unions is united in their push for resilient economies, land reclamation, responsible production and consumption, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, highlighting the widespread support for this initiative.

The Timber and Woodworkers Union of TUC actively contributes to the fight against climate change. They organize tree-planting exercises in various regions of the country, supporting the Green Ghana Agenda and helping to reduce the impact of climate change.



As part of their comprehensive approach, the union conducts Occupational Health and Safety training activities for members, demonstrating commitment to environmental and worker safety. Building Workers International (BWI) and IndustriAll global union affiliates in Ghana have carried out similar activities under the worldwide campaign "Heat Up Workers' Rights, Not the Planet!" These seminars provide union members with a comprehensive understanding of climate change's impact on jobs, wages, and workplace health and safety in industries such as wood and forestry, energy, water, petroleum, and transport.

In 2013, the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) signed a collective bargaining agreement with Norpalm Ghana Limited (NGL), a palm oil producer. The agreement has a significant clause on climate change, clearly recognizing the threat of climate change and compels both the union and the company to raise awareness, work closely with communities to mitigate the impact of climate change and promote sustainability. The management of NGL commits to developing a policy on climate change with the active participation of the workers and their organization.

However, to do so effectively and sustainably, the complexity of different factors and interactions must be unpacked to avoid a lack of knowledge, evidence-based data, and insecurity amongst trade union leaders about the implications of, for example, new technologies, climate change mitigation, and adaptation.



International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) International collaboration in advancing just transition for workers

In recent years, the ITUC–Africa–through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)–has united in strategic approaches and actions, fostering consensus to ensure a just transition. Collective efforts reached a significant milestone by integrating just transition in the preamble of the landmark and legally binding Paris Agreement in 2015.

Subsequently, the ITUC has continued to engage and collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and other relevant institutions, in operationalizing the concept of Just Transition at various levels.

At the global level, the ITUC and its regional organizations have taken the lead in ensuring that policies and resolutions contain Just Transition clauses and provisions and reflect workers’ concerns. ITUC–Africa’s comparative advantage is that it is part of the global ITUC family, representing 191 million workers in 167 countries and territories in 337 national affiliates.

With its unique political and numerical leverage, ITUC-Africa has been a powerful advocate at the bargaining tables. This strength has been used to pressure governments, employers, and other stakeholders, ensuring decent work and labour rights in the transition towards carbon neutrality. This approach has amplified workers’ voices and instilled hope for a fair and just transition.

This has been evident in the work within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), where the ITUC is recognized as representatives of workers and trade Unions under the major group constituencies and observer groups.

ITUC-Africa has advanced its policy advocacy at the regional level through strategic partnerships with institutions such as the Africa Union (AU). It has worked towards forming broad-based movements and coalitions with progressive organizations and actors, including academia, media, and community groups. One such coalition is the Just Transition Platform (JTP).

The JTP emerged from COP26 in Glasgow and is convened by ITUC-Africa, ClimateWorks Foundation, and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. It brings together over fifteen progressive organizations working on Climate and Just Transition in Africa. This strategic approach has amplified workers’ voices and pushed efforts towards defining and operationalizing a Just Transition for Africa with considerations for workers’ interests.

ITUC Africa has also supported its national affiliates in engaging in policy advocacy to guarantee Just Transition provisions in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Trade unions in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa have successfully introduced Just Transition clauses and provisions in their NDCs mainly due to existing channels of social dialogue available for multi-stakeholder engagement.

Some of these channels are formalized and institutionalized, such as the case of South Africa, whilst others, such as Nigeria and Kenya, are less formalized but still allow for the active participation of all stakeholders. Notably, there is continuous engagement and progress towards revising existing policies to integrate Just Transition clauses and provisions in Somalia.

Recognizing the challenges, ITUC–Africa, with support from its cooperating partners, has embarked on several capacity development and campaigning initiatives. These initiatives aim to enhance trade unions’ understanding of the concept of Just Transition. While progress has been made, the commitment to continuous learning and improvement is unwavering, ensuring a broader and deeper understanding of the concept by all.

IndustriALL Global Union

Global negotiations on climate change and just transition

Successful Just Transition approaches exhibit characteristics without which energy transition can be just. The extent to which governments and mining multinational companies embrace them will determine the success or failure of the just transition in workplaces and communities.

IndustriALL is composed of trade unions representing blue- and white-collar workers in metal, chemical, energy, mining, textile and related industries throughout the world. IndustriALL works to ensure that fundamentals of a just transition plan are in place (e.g., social dialogue, stakeholder engagement) and that mapping of potential green and decent jobs for an inclusive workforce is intensified. The global union works towards a Just Transition policy framework that is aligned with global human rights frameworks, ILO labour standards and the World Benchmark Alliance assessment report.

The below cases on global multinational corporations (MNCs) indicate how IndustriALL utilizes its international leverage as a global union with 50 million members in 140 countries to enter into global agreements to ensure that companies, utilities, and value chain companies aligned with the MNCs uphold freedom of association, collective bargaining and social dialogue on, for example, future green jobs, job security, social protection and skills development.

Company A¹⁵

IndustriALL successfully entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Framework of Global Dialogue with Company A. Company A is a leading multinational mining company based in Johannesburg, South Africa and London, United Kingdom. It is the world's largest producer of platinum, with 40% of world output, and a major producer of diamonds, copper, nickel, iron ore, and metallurgical and thermal coal. The company has operations in Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America and employs 90,000 employees, most of which (62%) are based in Africa.

Company A and IndustriALL mutually agreed to a mechanism of global dialogue under which issues of mutual interest, including industrial relations, climate change, industry 4.0, and the future of work, will jointly be handled and addressed. As a result of this agreement, Company A is committed to ensuring that throughout its global operations workers can freely exercise their internationally recognized rights especially to union membership and collective bargaining, without fear of retaliation, repression, or any other form of discrimination.

To permanently monitor workers' effective access to their fundamental rights, Company A and IndustriALL have affirmed their commitment to regularly meeting as a base for their global dialogue. In addition, Company A and IndustriALL will keep communicating as frequently as deemed necessary by the parties. This global dialogue mechanism creates an environment to work on policy matters of shared interests to Company A and IndustriALL, such as:

Engaging on how to manage the introduction of new technologies into the workplace, including topics such as safety impacts, clarifying overall impacts on employment levels and training/retraining provision:

- Dialogue on how to ensure a just transition for coal industry workers; and
- Responsible mining issues, such as the joint commitment to the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) and downstream stewardship initiatives relevant to Company A and IndustriALL.

¹⁵ Company name has been removed for the sake of anonymity.

Company B: Engie in consultation with trade unions

IndustriALL recently re-negotiated a global framework agreement with the French multinational Engie, the world's largest gas, water services and electric utility that employs over 170,000 ENGIE workers globally. The renewed agreement represents a decade of international social dialogue between Engie and IndustriALL at European and global levels, stating that the neutral carbon transition must be accompanied by a more sustainable and inclusive method of social development in terms of social protection, diversity and skills development.

ENGIE actively supports the principles of a "Just Transition" and climate change in accordance with the guiding principles of the ILO and promotes a just transition to ecologically sustainable economies and societies for all.

Company C: EDF

IndustriALL renewed its global framework agreement with EDF—a major energy player and the world's leading electricity operator covering over 160,000 workers in 4 countries. Through this agreement, both parties committed themselves to the principle of a "Just Transition" for a meaningful transition towards economies and companies that are environmentally sustainable for all, which is in line with ILO's guidelines. As such, the group undertakes adequate skills training for its workers while protecting their rights and interests in cooperation with workers' representatives.

One advantage of this kind of global framework agreement is that it helps prevent or solve conflicts and anticipate challenges for them when committing to, for example, due diligence and just transition within EDF. The agreement is monitored by a dialogue committee on corporate social responsibility, but the comparative advantage of IndustriALL is that its affiliated member unions often have elected local shop stewards in local group companies to enforce global, national and local agreements.

Lessons learned from IndustriALL have been integrated into a policy on energy transition for all its affiliates. IndustriALL supports related initiatives of youth activist schools to build the capacities of young trade unionists and raise climate activists in the African region.



International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Organizing workers in public transport

Urban transport workers are affected by two factors: (a) climate change through extreme weather events, and (b) technological change introduced to make urban transport systems sustainable. The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) believes that for any substantial emissions cut, significant investments must be made in public transport.

While there is a general push to reduce transport emissions, representing 21% of global carbon emissions, the workers who transport systems and the communities they serve are often not prioritized in government plans.

Transport unions are seldom invited to consultations with national governments and large international donors to solve the contentious issues of who is likely to be employed during the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Nevertheless, transport unions can often mediate and avoid disputes between affected workers and BRT, reducing social unrest and frustration from small Matatu drivers. This was indeed the case in Johannesburg BRT.

Urban transport workers are affected by weather events, technological fixes (such as electric vehicles, and particularly electric buses), displacing the current workforce, especially informal transport workers, and the introduction of new urban transport systems. These factors exacerbate precarious working conditions, especially for women and young workers, and expose them to extreme weather events.

Therefore, the strategic approach by ITF and its affiliated unions focuses on the impact of climate policies on transport workers and the broader socio-economic transformations necessary to transform societies and move to a low-carbon economy. Globally, urban cities increasingly seek to decarbonize urban transport by introducing electric vehicles and BRT systems, automatizing functions within the transport system, especially new ticketing functions, and concentrating operations on fewer (but larger) companies.

A new electric bus infrastructure in Nairobi, Kenya

Nairobi grapples with inadequate and unplanned public transportation. The government plans to establish a structured Mass Rapid Transport System for Nairobi (MRTS), including the Bus Rapid System (BRT) and commuter rail. The design of BRT lanes along Thika Superhighway prompted TAWU to represent public transport workers and public citizens. The key deal-maker, Nairobi Metropolitan Transport Authority (NaMATA), is an agency responsible for implementing the BRT system in Nairobi. When it introduced the new BRT system and piloted electric-bus-only corridors in the city, it promised to create thousands of new jobs with the electrification of buses. However, while jobs may be created by introducing new technologies or systems, other jobs are lost in the process at the expense of informal matatu drivers. Low-skilled female and younger workers become more precarious with the introduction of new technologies.

While governments, funding agencies, and employers promote a labour-intensive approach to address a just transition and employment concerns, the ITF and the Kenyan transport union are skeptical about the ambitious employment potentials. The government seems to ignore or underestimate workers' rights and climate justice: they do not address who wins, who loses, how it happens, and, most importantly, why. ITF and TAWU push for social dialogue to discuss likely impacts and how they can best be addressed.



Transport Workers Unions of Kenya (TAWU)

The Transport Workers Union of Kenya (TAWU) lobbies the government, dealmakers, and the Nairobi Municipality, demanding a just transition focusing on worker-led and gender-equal formalization, additional pay during extreme weather, job guarantees for transport workers, pension support to workers near retirement, occupational health and safety rights, democratic control of urban transport, ensuring public transport as a public good, etc.

With the help of ITF, TAWU is building its numerical strength to organize and represent workers in informal public transport (matatu), a contentious industry in Nairobi. Workers in the informal matatu industry risk losing their jobs and transitioning to public e-bus infrastructures. The strategy is to influence policymakers—through more members—to endorse unions as permanent board members in NAMATA and to contribute to sustainable public transport in Nairobi. Thus, strong union representation is a precondition for negotiating a just transition with gender equality and decent jobs.

With the support of ITF, TAWU draws on lessons learned from like-minded transport unions from other countries, such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda. Hence, TAWU has adjusted its constitution to (a) accommodate informal matatu drivers and other workers, either individually or through their association (setting out modalities of membership union dues payment as well as representation in the union), (b) adopt an App technology to organize and recruit new members, collect union dues and promote social protection contributions via mobile money services, and (c) creating awareness about BRT.

Furthermore, through inspiration from other countries, as advised by ITF, TAWU has strategically engaged public stakeholders, such as the National Social Security Fund, for their “haba haba”, a social security scheme that includes contributions from informal economy members through mobile phone payments. This contributed to membership increases, and informal workers are now represented vis-a-vis national and local governments. Today, TAWU collectively negotiates with four associations in Nairobi and Mombasa, representing over 4,000 drivers.

Since 2019, TAWU has influenced national and local transport authorities due to its numerical strength. It has submitted union positions and public campaigning and built alliances with other transport unions and civil organizations. TAWU has also negotiated with the Ministry of Transport, county governors, and other government forums to implement BRT in Nairobi, using its legal and constitutional position. Recently, TAWU held round table discussions with NaMATA on issues around BRT system implementation and workers’ issues through their representation in the ‘Socially Just Public Transport’ Working Group.

Kenya Electrical Trades and Allied Workers' Union KETAWU Electricians as green innovators in disruptive technologies

Many countries worldwide are investing in future energy solutions to sustainably meet the ever-increasing energy demand and achieve the net-zero climate action goals. With huge renewable energy potential, Africa holds some of the most significant renewable energy resources, including geothermal energy, especially along the East African Great Rift Valley system, that can only be unlocked through innovative approaches.

The rapid advancement of disruptive technologies and the urgent need for sustainability have created opportunities for organized electricians in Kenya's energy sector to emerge as green innovators in various industries, such as Kenya Generation Company (KenGen), a leading power generation company in Kenya.

The Kenya Electrical Trades and Allied Workers Union (KETAWU) demonstrates how electricians drive the adoption of sustainable and disruptive technologies that ultimately contribute to Kenya's transition to a greener and more energy-efficient future. Over 88 percent of energy source in Kenya is green and renewable energy (geothermal, hydro, wind and solar energy). Almost 16 million people do not have access to electricity. This requires investments in innovation to handle the energy crisis sustainably.

KETAWU collaborates and bargains collectively with the leading electric power generation company, the Kenya Electricity Generating Company PLC (KenGen). As a provider of 72% of electricity in Kenya, KENGEN plays a crucial role in meeting Kenya's growing demand for electricity while addressing environmental concerns. KenGen has a unique opportunity to lead the industry in adopting disruptive technologies and promoting sustainable practices through sustainable innovation towards the green work environment.

KETAWU adopts different strategic interventions in its collaboration with KenGen:

Skill Set and Expertise: Electricians possess the technical knowledge and expertise required to understand and implement disruptive technologies. They are well-versed in electrical systems, energy management, and renewable energy sources, making them ideal candidates to spearhead green innovation initiatives.

Identifying Opportunities:

Electricians identify opportunities for integrating disruptive technologies within KenGen's operations. This includes areas such as renewable energy generation, energy storage systems, smart grid technologies—and energy efficiency solutions. By analyzing existing infrastructures and evaluating emerging technologies, electricians organized by KETAWU propose innovative solutions that align with KenGen's sustainability and efficiency goals.

Implementation and Maintenance:

Electricians play a vital role in implementing and maintaining disruptive technologies. They lead the installation of renewable energy systems, manage smart grid integration, and ensure the smooth functioning of energy storage systems. Furthermore, electricians conduct regular maintenance and troubleshooting services to optimize these technologies' performance.



KETAWU electrician members provide benefits to the operations of KENGEN as green innovators to optimize its disruptive technologies through:

Environmental Impact:

By embracing disruptive technologies, KenGen can significantly reduce its carbon footprint and mitigate the environmental impact of traditional energy generation methods. Electricians drive the adoption of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, contributing to a cleaner and greener energy mix.

Cost Savings:

Disruptive technologies, such as energy-efficient systems and smart grid solutions, can help KenGen optimize energy consumption and reduce operational costs. Electricians can identify opportunities for energy savings, implement intelligent monitoring systems, and propose strategies for efficient energy management.

Job Creation and Local Development:

The transition to disruptive technologies requires a skilled workforce. During local consultations and regular collective bargaining, KETAWU argues for more investments in training programs to empower electricians with the necessary knowledge so KenGen can create job opportunities and foster local development. This proactive approach contributes to the growth of the green economy and helps address unemployment challenges. KETAWU has nevertheless pointed to a range of challenges that electricians can solve with KenGen, and suggested several mitigation strategies (but not limited to):

Limited Awareness and Education:

Many electricians may lack knowledge of disruptive technologies. To overcome this challenge, KenGen can organize training programs, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms to equip electricians with the latest trends and innovations.

Infrastructure Compatibility:

Integrating disruptive technologies into an existing infrastructure can pose compatibility challenges. Electricians can collaborate closely with engineers, technicians, and other stakeholders to ensure seamless integration and overcome technical barriers.

Financial Constraints:

The initial costs of adopting disruptive technologies are major hurdles. However, KETAWU and its electrician members can work alongside KenGen's finance department to develop cost-benefit analyses, explore financing options, and demonstrate the long-term benefits of these technologies.

Electricians are green innovators in disruptive technologies within the framework of KenGen and, thus, key agents of change. By leveraging their expertise, identifying opportunities, and driving the adoption of sustainable practices, KETAWU and its electrician members contribute to Kenya's transition towards a greener and more sustainable energy landscape.

National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU Uganda) Linkages between just transition and social protection for workers left behind

In Uganda, the national government has put forward several strategies for greening the economy, including skills development for clean technologies, green job programmes, and attracting foreign direct investments in renewable energy and agriculture. However, the country is characterized by a widespread informal economy dominated by youth below the age of 25 years. In 2020, only 3% of the Ugandan population was covered and only 14% of workers have some sort of social protection. This leaves millions exposed.

After years of strategic re-thinking, the National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) decided to accommodate union members from the informal economy and is committed to improving their social safety nets and protection against climate extremes and disasters in Uganda. NOTU has been at the forefront of raising the public agenda to expand social protection for the informal economy. NOTU saw a breakthrough in negotiations with the Ugandan government in 2022 when the parliament agreed to expand social protection to cater to informal economy workers. The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) has around 1.4 million registered members who enjoy age benefits and survivor benefits.

Due to NOTU's lobbying work, the NSSF Act was amended to provide for midterm access to pension savings, which is an important cushion against economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Through NOTU efforts, any worker can contribute to the scheme regardless of their employment situation. The amendment of the Act also made it compulsory for all companies and organizations, regardless of size, to contribute to the NSSF.

NOTU worked deliberately and strategically to influence the Parliament and the President of Uganda during the review process of the NSSF. NOTU worked closely with the five workers-members of parliament and used its parliamentary network to promote its interests in social protection and just transition. For example, by outlining the risks associated with structural adjustment programmes, the trade union leaders agreed with the President of Uganda to amend and update the NSSF Act. As a result of this lobbying strategy, the government and the president allowed for midterm access to pension savings and the introduction of voluntary membership.

In effect, NOTU has cushioned against climate change impacts on its members and continues to advocate for better national climate financing with adequate allocations in national finance budgets. In parallel, union shop stewards are promoting the potential of social protection nationwide to build the resilience of informal economy workers and young graduates against current climate extremes and disasters.



National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa (NUM) Just energy transition in the mining industries

Case 1: Komati Coal Power Plant Repurposing: Lack of job security in the energy transition

Protecting existing jobs while creating new, cleaner jobs with the same or better benefits for workers is a thorny issue for trade unions organizing in energy and coal sectors. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) organizes workers in the two sectors in South Africa and has reservations about the notion that there will be no job losses for workers in the coal energy generation value chain during the transition.

Hypothetical job promises by mining companies state that when job losses occur, they will be replaced by new green jobs in the energy sector. To this end, NUM has emphasized to South African stakeholders that an energy transition will likely cause a loss of real jobs and disrupt families' livelihoods. Hence, when it came to the issue of closing coal power stations in South Africa as part of the transition to cleaner energy sources, the NUM argued that if coal power stations are to be closed, there should be proof that no one will lose a job or livelihood. Alternative jobs and source livelihoods for those affected must be guaranteed before closing coal power stations. This means that NUM has problems with supporting the closing of coal power stations, even if it is good for the environment.

The government yielded to NUM's demand and concerns and undertook to repurpose rather than close down the Komati Coal Power Plant. The repurposing had to be closely monitored to confirm that livelihoods could be protected or improved with a managed close-down of coal power stations.

The outcomes of closing and repurposing the power station confirmed the NUM's fears that not all livelihoods could be secured with the closing down of the coal plant and not all jobs could be retained. Efforts were made to redeploy all direct workers to other coal plants –not clean energy power plants. Nothing was done for workers employed under subcontractors. No interventions were made to support those around the plant whose small businesses depended on the closed plant.



A key message from the NUM's non-compromising stand against coal power station closure is that it forced stakeholders to embark on the process cautiously and as an experiment. In the end, it has emerged that the coal power station closure model has gaps in ensuring job security, especially for non-permanent and outsourced workers. The closure and the repurposing model of coal power plants is being revisited to ensure that all lives dependent on coal power plant economic ecosystems have their livelihood guaranteed.

A key lesson from the NUM stance on the Komati power station closure is that if the union has concerns about the justness of the energy transition interventions and does not have strong facts at the point of the discussions, it can agree on an experimental intervention.

Case 2: Social Dialogue in NEDLAC about a South African Just Energy Investment Plan.

NUM is involved in dialogues on the energy transition path under the national trade union centre COSATU. NUM's concern about the transition has been the possible privatization of the country's energy sector and the privatization of the state-owned entity, the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM).

The NUM default position is that access to energy is a merit service, hence a right to all people, irrespective of their economic status. If the private sector were to take control of the energy sector, the right to access energy by citizens would no longer be feasible. The government would have forfeited its developmental state responsibility regarding energy provision to all.

The government's position has been that the transition to cleaner energy sources will not result in privatizing the energy sector. Eskom, the country's state-owned energy entity, would remain central to energy provision in the country. They argue that energy transition involves multi-year, –sectoral– and jurisdictional initiatives with stakeholders to ensure a just process. However, the government drafted a Just Energy Transition Plan (JET IP) with no labour input. The Cabinet endorsed the plan, and the government launched the plan at COP 27 in Egypt in 2022.

The NUM–through COSATU–contested the adoption and implementation of the JET IP plan based on the following reasons, amongst others:

- The plan focused mainly on renewable energies, such as wind and solar. However, the country's energy policy adopted and accepted by workers was that of an energy mix where all energy sources would be considered based on their merits. The plan should ensure that all other energy sources are considered in terms of investment.
- The plan was too dependent on external funding, which carries the risk of eroding the interest of the government and other local stakeholders in the energy transition.
- The plan did not acknowledge that for effective social protection, measures needed to be put in place first and budgeted for before embarking on the transition.
- The plan allocated a small budget to local skills development. This could imply that the country intended to import skills and use the loaned funds to pay for such skills in the form of experts and technical support costs. If this were to happen, it would mean that the country would be borrowing to pay for external skills rather than creating its own local skills, which would be, in effect, the “just” element of the energy transition.

In early 2023, the Presidential Commission on Climate Change (PCC) presented the JET IP for endorsement by trade unions, but NUM and others rejected it for the above reasons.

In early 2023, the Presidential Commission on Climate Change (PCC) presented the JET IP for endorsement by trade unions, but NUM and others rejected it for the above reasons. The PCC has noted and conceded to the rejection of the JET IP and thus delayed its implementation in earnest. The proposal on the table from trade unions is that the plan should be referred to NEDLAC, where all stakeholders will go through it, provide input, and agree on it. NUM's strategy is to have the plan amended or rejected and not participate.

The delayed implementation of the JET-IP plan and its referral to NEDLAC for comprehensive unpacking and revision in a truly multi-stakeholder forum are interim successes for the NUM in ensuring that the energy transition process remains just in practice. A key lesson here is that even when some unjust policies are expedited, if labour gets organized and rejects them through social dialogue, there is an opportunity to change direction in the interest of the justness of the energy transition.

Case 3: The Case of Anglo America Platinum–Forums between employers and trade unions to mitigate adverse effects of disruptive technology on workers during energy transition.

Since 2020, the NUM has been proactive in understanding how different technologies introduced in the mining and energy sectors will likely impact its members and communities. The union notes that its leadership and members are called upon to discuss how the fast-unfolding technologies might impact the union and its members but without detailed information to engage constructively on the matter.

NUM research and basic information on 4IR have sensitized NUM members to engage with 4IR phenomena and accompanying disruptive technologies. Internal documentation about prerequisites for a common approach to 4IR challenges for workers addresses employment and worker-employer dynamics under previous industrial revolutions, the opportunities/risks with 4IR technologies, and how to respond to 4IR as organized labour. As a result, workers recognized the risks related to technology and the need to take steps to minimize such risks in the future. It was realized that proactive and targeted re-skilling was needed for today's workers to stay relevant tomorrow. A key constraint to this proactive planning for future work, driven by new technologies in the workplace and migration to low-emission energy regimes, is trade unions' lack of knowledge of future technologies. This information often resides with employers.

In recent years, NUM has proposed that the issue of future technologies should be added to information sought from employers during wage negotiations. But even before this could formally happen, workers should lobby their employers to create forums on future work where information pertaining to the future of work and technologies is discussed and measures to mitigate the impact on workers collectively devised. It was against this background that NUM and other unions came to be part of the "Co-creating Our Evolving Workplace" initiative in 2023 at Anglo America Platinum to share information on the future of work and, particularly, emerging technologies. Information sharing allows all stakeholders, including trade unions, to plan accordingly so their members remain relevant in the workplace. Also, Anglo American Platinum Executives, union leaders, and business leaders outlined the future of work, technology deployment, and skilling impacts in South African mining and within Anglo American Platinum. Proactive steps in workplace transition in the context of employment and innovation are also agreed upon.

A key lesson from the future of work initiative at Anglo America Platinum is that when it comes to mitigating the adverse effects of disruptive technologies on workers, trade unions must cooperate with employers because information on future technologies is normally not readily available to trade unions.

Public Services International (PSI) A just transition for rural communities in Colombia

The Public Services International (PSI) is a global union federation of workers in public services. It is unique because it organizes well-positioned civil service members to work as labour rights and climate justice advocates within key line ministries. PSI often brings to the attention of national ministries cases of climate challenges in the communities.

Case 1: SINTRACUAVALLE union members as water innovators

Just transition covers mitigation initiatives, such as the shift away from fossil fuels. It also involves adaptation initiatives, such as adapting water distribution systems to function under the pressure of climate change disruptions while moving closer to ensuring universal quality services to communities and decent work for workers in the water system.

The rural water system in Colombia is based on the premise that rural communities organize local cooperatives that become the owners and managers of the water infrastructure required to ensure water supplies in their community. The cooperative systems abide by government rules and guidelines. This cooperative-managed system is then connected to the department-owned system that reviews how the rural system meets its standards. In the Valle del Cauca department, the state-owned company is ACUAVALLE. Unions are also key contributors to developing adaptation solutions that advance equity and justice.

The union of water workers in ACUAVALLE, SINTRACUAVALLE has taken the opportunity of this context to develop collaborative relationships with many of the rural communities and their water cooperatives. SINTRACUAVALLE has many experiences supporting the community in fulfilling the requirements of the law, beyond their responsibility to the workers of ACUAVALLE, and part of an explicit union agenda of the union-community alliance.

This has also led the union to use the knowledge and experience of its members, who are water systems experts, to find innovative solutions to specific technical challenges faced by rural communities. One example of the technical contribution is in the municipality of Ginebra in Valle del Cauca, where union members developed a chemical-free wastewater treatment adapted to the community's local conditions. This responded to the community's need to maintain their access to quality clean water while responding to the need to shift to environmentally more sustainable technology. It also had the added advantages of affordability to the community and eliminated weather-related disruptions.

Case 2: USE union bridge between public authorities and vulnerable communities

The increased frequency and intensity of weather events, including droughts and inundations, translate into disruptions to water flow into the city of Cali, located in the valley of the Cauca River. The union USE (Union Sindical EMCALI) organizes the state-owned municipal services of the city EMCALI, which works with communities upstream of the city. USE responded to the challenges of low-quality water that flows into the city's water system.

The Empresas Municipales de Cali (EMCALI) is a state-owned company providing water, telecommunications, and electricity services in Cali, Colombia. USE has negotiated a clause in their collective agreement that commits EMCALI to provide annual financial resources for projects that communities will implement to protect water sources in the city's outskirts.

The resources are provided to USE, which calls and selects project applications. In negotiations, the management accepted that preserving water sources from contamination reduces the purification costs to the city. Management accepted that USE has the linkages with communities to involve them in joint initiatives to preserve water sources.



Through dialogue, USE understands the needs of the communities and finds solutions that provide alternatives for preserving the water sources. This is important because the communities largely depend on livestock or illegal small-scale mining for a livelihood, both high contaminants of water.

This process has become a systematic channel for the union to bond with the communities that live in the areas where the water sources that feed the city water system are located. Based on mutual trust and daily consultations between communities and shop stewards, the union is informed of issues affecting the waterways.

This works as an early warning system, especially when the community faces challenges requiring intervention from the authorities. For instance, the union recently brought to the attention of the national ministry that local intimidation and threats to life by local mining mafias are frequent.

Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) Skills development to carry the green transition

Skills gaps in the Malawian labor market limit productivity, job prospects, labor mobility, and workers' ability to earn a decent income in the green transition. The main challenge in Malawi is the lack of skilled labour to implement the green transition with its new technologies. In recent years, the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) and the government have prioritized skills development and technical and vocational training (TVET). Outdated and academic-focused curricula and teachers meant that TVET needed to be more demand-driven, practical, shorter, and updated by workers and employers' organizations. with little relevant workplace experience.

Lobbying government for national skills development

MCTU contributes to raising the supply of shorter, modular, and practical TVET courses for workers in the informal economy, especially young female students. National stakeholders now benefit from constructive tripartite social dialogue, particularly workers' proposals, on how to incorporate and institutionalize a demand-driven approach to TVET to support the green transition. The strategy cushions young workers and builds their resilience against economic recessions, climate shocks, and environmental disasters often experienced in Malawi.

MCTU provides skills to young females and construction workers in the informal economy to carry out environment-friendly house construction, thus making them more resilient to economic shocks to their livelihoods. The trade union movement was also key in influencing and lobbying training institutes, ministries, and authorities in Malawi to acknowledge and certify the short (two-week) construction course.

As a result of this, short green demonstration courses developed by MCTU have been certified by the regulatory body Technical Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA). These courses are institutionalized country-wide and target workers in the informal economy who are unable to afford the charges or do not have time to attend full time or year-long courses.

This strategic approach used by MCTU resulted in a solid foundation for a just transition in the formal and informal construction industry. It took its departure in a range of initiatives:

- Research and study tours were conducted before various test models were developed to lobby the national TEVETA authority.
- Over 800 students and workers graduated from training courses.
- Trade union leaders and representatives were simultaneously trained on social dialogue, lobbying, campaigning, and advocating for more funds for technical training institutions in TVET.
- A range of key stakeholders' meetings was also held to raise awareness through media about the key role of social partners in identifying demand-driven skills.
- A range of articles and media contributed to increased coverage of TVET and labour rights for construction workers, resulting in the Malawian president announcing that TVET is key to future job creation. MCTU used countrywide radio/TV stations with an audience of over 75 % of the 20 million Malawian population.

Research found that upskilling young girls and women reduces their exposure to unemployment, extreme poverty, etc., due to the green transition in the construction industries. Approximately 43% of the 800 students were women/girls, and the two-week construction course made them more employable and skilled construction workers.

The strategic approach was supported by value addition and international best practices from Danish (DTDA), South African, and West African trade unions, as well as expertise from like-minded unions that contributed with technical TVET know-how.

Skills development in high-emitting industries

This case confirms how workers and employers' organizations need to be involved in the long term to reform TVET systems to be more responsive to—and in touch with—ever-changing skills needs in companies and the informal economy. Their direct access to employers and workers can identify future needs, especially in construction companies where the workforce operates disruptive technologies and up-coming sustainable and environment-friendly production lines and materials—especially in developing countries.

A key lesson learned is that it is key to provide short vocational courses and public awarding of graduates with TEVETA certification. In light of the high-emitting construction industries, it can have country-wide effects once they are institutionalized in more technical colleges and training institutions placed in Malawi.

In a similarly high-emitting industry, MCTU currently supports shorter and practical vocational training courses on solar cell installation and maintenance in Malawi's energy transition from conventional fossil-fuel energy to more renewable solar energy. This is currently being done in collaboration with the employers' organization ECAM and is supported by DTDA and the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI).



Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC)

Waste management and green jobs in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is one of the world's hardest-hit countries by the consequences of climate change, such as thunderstorms, floods, droughts, and land – and mudslides. The country is in an environmental crisis and drowns in garbage and plastic floating in streets and nature.

Informalized workers in the streets make up over 90% of the total workforce, and climate change, as well as a collapsed formal business community, pushes people to migrate out of Sierra Leone towards Europe. But progress on mitigating and adapting to climate change has been thwarted by human actions despite the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and UNFCCC.

Environmental degradation of Freetown, population increases over the years, and high incidences of poverty have led to unsustainable exploitation of the existing natural resources, unplanned urbanization, and unsustainable consumption patterns. This has resulted in poor waste management, especially in the capital Freetown. Added to vegetation removal, artisanal mining activities often lead to the diversion of surface drainage systems and cause serious siltation in rivers, making the water unfit for use by downstream users.

As a consequence of the environmental crisis, the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) has positioned itself as a strategic partner to the government, other key stakeholders, and the municipality of Freetown to remove waste from the streets and how to raise awareness to discourage people from dumping waste in the gutters.

Post-flooding challenges continue to affect key socio-economic sectors such as health, agriculture, forestry, coastal habitat and biodiversity, tourism, fishery, and water. SLLC has raised its concerns because workers have been affected by the loss of lives, homes and properties destroyed, and sustained injuries. Informal workers are amongst the most affected and hardest hit due to the precarious nature of their work. Union members have consequently been victims of the flooding and account for deaths and damages, with women and children being severely hit by these disasters.



Organizing waste collectors in the informal economy

The SLLC organizes and contributes to creating sustainable jobs for waste collectors in the informal economy while contributing to a green and fair transition in the country. Waste collecting workers pick up trash from customers as needed through digital tools. Young workers receive transport and protective equipment.

Waste collectors are an example of how SLLC and workers adapt to climate change and contribute to creating jobs for young people, a cleaner environment, and a green, just transition. With systematic campaigns, they are expected to reach over 1 million people.

To formalize and cushion informal economy workers from more economic and climate shocks, SLLC provides membership services to informal waste collectors. SLLC has established a trade union for waste collectors that works with the city council to introduce more efficient waste management and collection using informal economy and casualized workers.



SLLC works with several affiliated unions to organize waste collectors in existing or new unions for waste collectors. Due to limited information on the impact of climate change on the workforce, SLLC has –through its Education Department– trained its members of all affiliated unions in organizing workers (e.g., information and communication technologies, mobile phone Apps, social media, etc.) and decent work.

Lobbying and negotiations with Freetown municipality about green jobs

SLLC has, in recent years, utilized its comparative advantage as a key and influential trade union centre in waste management. As a deliberate strategic alliance choice, SLLC uses its numerical and political leverage in its regular negotiations with Freetown municipal authority to improve working conditions for waste collectors.

As a result of negotiations between SLLC and the Freetown municipal authority, waste collectors have been included in the 'Transform Freetown' programme by the Freetown City Council geared toward activities ranging from waste management and infrastructure to resource mobilization, city beautification, etc.

Another achievement of this strategic decision is that green jobs are created for young people working in smaller community groups that gather and dispose of waste. Today, they are trained in information and communication technologies and mobile apps, which allow a person to locate and call the waste management team to pick up the waste.

They are provided with tricycles and protective gear. Waste collectors are concrete examples of how workers – and their unions – adapt to climate change and contribute to job creation for young people, a cleaner environment and a green and just transition to an environmental-friendly society.



Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) Just transition in Vietnam's chemical and pharmaceutical industries

Vietnam's chemical and pharmaceutical industry has been identified as having a considerable environmental impact due to its resource consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and generation of pollutants, especially through wastewater. The negative effects on working conditions and the environment have been recognized, so initiatives have been undertaken to reduce emissions, control pollution, and enhance the industry's overall environmental contribution.

Funded by the Japanese Government through the ILO-Japan Partnership Programme, a project aims to bolster the technical knowledge, managerial capabilities, and policy influence of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and its affiliates in the chemical and pharmaceutical sectors. The project focuses on organizing workers for social dialogue, fostering collaboration with community-based organizations, and facilitating collective bargaining for a just transition at both enterprise and sector levels.

Key thematic priorities of the project include trade union adoption of ILO Just Transition Guidelines, engagement with employers in social dialogue, cooperation with community-based organizations to monitor environmental impacts and establishing mechanisms for institutional capacity building. The project's approach includes the development of a Just Transition mini-toolkit, impact assessments, advocacy efforts, capacity-building activities, and outreach programs for non-unionized workplaces.

Through its implementation strategy based on social dialogue principles, the project has achieved significant progress:

1. Enhanced awareness and capacity of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour and its affiliates in the chemical and pharmaceutical industries.
2. Publication of a syndicate model review and recommendations for strengthening syndicate capacity.
3. Active involvement in the Domestic Advisory Group within the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, aiming to enhance representation and advocacy for workers' rights.
4. Distribution of educational materials, such as the guidebook on occupational accidents and diseases, to improve worker knowledge on occupational safety and health.

The intervention has made impactful strides in promoting sustainability, worker rights, and environmental responsibility within Vietnam's chemical and pharmaceutical industries through the empowerment of trade unions and collaborative efforts with various stakeholders.



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About the Bureau for Worker's Activities (ACTRAV)

The Bureau for Worker's Activities (ACTRAV) mandate is to strengthen representative, independent, and democratic trade unions in all countries, enabling them to effectively protect worker's rights and interests and provide effective services to their members at national and international levels. The bureau also promotes the ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions.

ACTRAV mission is to maintain close relations with the trade union movement in various countries worldwide and to provide trade unions with the support of the International Labour Office in endeavoring to strengthen their influence by promoting activities that defend and advance worker's rights.

ACTRAV links the International Labour Office and one of its key constituents – the trade union movement. It ensures that concerns of trade unions are incorporated into all the activities of the International Labour Office. In effect, ACTRAV enables trade union organizations to make full use of the Office's potential. It also enables the Office to count on the support of trade unions in promoting and attaining its goals of social justice, fundamental rights at work, the defense and expansion of social protection, full employment, and equality of treatment. The ACTRAV mission is implemented in cooperation with its structures in the field and with the ILO's Headquarters in Geneva.

About DTDA

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) develops and implements programme cooperation and methods based on the values and networks of the trade union movement. It was established in 1987 by two national trade union centres LO and FTF (today FH).

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency contributes to the creation of fair, democratic, social and economic conditions in developing countries, through the promotion of sustainable labour markets with social dialogue, tripartite institutions and a democratic and well-functioning trade union movement.

The work of the Danish Trade Union Development Agency is premised on the objectives of the Decent Work Agenda and the four pillars of ILO. The Danish Trade Union Development Agency has, over the last 25 years, been supporting trade union partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and in recent years, East Europe. The Danish Trade Union Development Agency has its headquarters in Denmark and has five sub-regional offices in Guatemala, the Philippines, Tanzania, Togo, and Tunisia.

About this guide

This guide offers practical policy-oriented guidance on addressing the trade union challenges and dilemmas in a just transition. The aim is to offer practical guidance to trade union leaders in developing countries on integrating environmental and low-carbon sustainability and a just transition into their daily work. This includes exploring different approaches and trade-offs when creating space in existing workers' organizations and when negotiating with employers and governments.

