



POLICY POSITION: GREEN ENERGY AND THE JUST TRANSITION

Problem Statement

South Africa faces a twin global and domestic crisis. On the domestic front, the country is plagued by devastating electricity blackouts, negating any prospect of economic growth. Globally, the world faces an existential and generational crisis in climate change.

The science is clear that the planet is heating as a rate that already threatens the sustainability of the human species. If not urgently addressed, large parts of the world will be uninhabitable, forcing a new wave of climate migration. Sea levels will rise, wiping out coastal settlements and infrastructure. (Un)natural disasters will increase exponentially, causing death and destruction in its wake. Food, water and other natural resources will become scarcer, further threatening the sustainability of human beings, particular the poor who – like everything else – will be the hardest hit by the effects of climate change. Inequality will rise, as the rich insulate themselves from the effects, while the poor have no protection.

South Africa's reliance on coal both in its energy mix and as a major export threatens the resilience of its economy in the future. Foreign investment is also increasingly being limited to green destinations, forcing South Africa to adapt or be left behind in a fast-evolving global economy.

As the economy shifts, coal production will become more expensive and research now shows clearly that green energy is both the cheapest and cleanest form of energy for the future, and the case is made stronger by the abundant wind and solar natural resources available to South Africa.

Due to the reliance on fossil fuels, energy production accounts for about 72% of all global CO₂ emissions – and is therefore the sector in most urgent need of reform.

Solutions

The twin crises of energy insecurity and climate change must be met with the same response: an urgent and sweeping transition to green energy.

GOOD therefore advocates for the following:

Energy generation and Loadshedding

- Decommissioning and retiring of coal-powered energy plants no later than according to their schedule;
- No New Coal - a just transition must lead to a phasing out of sources of energy that are reliant on fossil fuels.

- A commitment to pursue an energy mix that is 100% made up of renewable energy sources within the shortest timeframe possible, focused on maximising South Africa's wind and solar potential, supported by battery storage;
- Unlocking the barriers for private sector investment in the renewable energy generation sector, with appropriate social and environmental protections;
- The state should own and control the transmission grid, and ensure fair pricing to consumers;
- Urgently restore the capabilities of the state transmission grid, using international climate finance, to allow the grid to take the extra renewable capacity.

Climate policy

- GOOD supports the full implementation of the Paris agreement of 2015, particularly to pursue measures to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and ensure that the flow of all public and private money is consistent with the required climate action;
- In order to fund the climate action that South Africa and other developing countries require, wealthier states who created the problem must pay for the solution. The funding must be in the form of grants rather than loans which simply increase the indebtedness of the Global South to the West.

Just transition

- Climate action must advance inclusive development, and not exaggerate South Africa's inequalities;
- Workers in fossil fuel industries must have their incomes protected despite the transition.