

The positive impacts of a future low-carbon energy sector

South Africa is more and more committed to transitioning to a clean energy system to address climate change and ensure a secure and reliable access to electricity to its citizens. The 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) moves in this direction, as it fixed important targets in terms of renewables capacity to be added (22,500MW solar and wind) and substantial coal-fired capacity to be decommissioned (about 11,000MW) by 2030. However, South Africa's energy sector still heavily depends on coal, which provides 77% of the country's energy needs. Moreover, the clean energy transition presents issues to overcome, such as the socio-economic impact on the workforce.



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"The global and local energy landscapes are changing which means that the transition is already underway. It is up to us, acting collaboratively, to actively ensure that this transition is just. For us, sustainable economic growth of the country, socio-economic prosperity and environmental protection are the cornerstones of our just energy transition pathway," said Mandy Rambharos, head of Eskom's Just Energy Transition Project Office, at a virtual event, promoted by the RES4Africa Foundation.

The aim of the event was to reflect on the socio-economic impacts of the energy transition, such as new jobs created, workforce relocation and communities' resilience. To support the wide conversation, RES4Africa, in collaboration with South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Environmental Resources Management (ERM), developed the [A Just Energy Transition in South Africa report](#) to assess the number of new jobs that will be created by the transition to renewables and which skills will be required, as well as to draw a reskilling framework plan.

Reskilling

As the study shows, the overall balance of the energy transition is positive as the new jobs created by the renewable energy sector will compensate – and in some cases, exceed – the ones lost in the coal sector. Moreover, a re-skilling plan can contribute to mitigating the job losses from the coal power stations and mining, and to ensure that the renewable energy industry in South Africa will be serviced by local workers, that will have the opportunity to operate in cleaner and safer environments with significant benefits on their health. To do so, the study presents lessons learned from countries where the transition to a low-carbon energy system has already occurred, focusing on the main socio-economic achievements in terms of Sustainable Development Goals, and highlighting similarities and advising possible useful actions for the South African case.

"Understanding the socio-economic impacts of moving to a low-carbon energy market is crucial to ensure that the energy transition occurs in a just way, leaving no one behind, Through this study, we hope to support South African institutions in driving its clean and just energy transition," said Roberto Vigotti, secretary general of RES4Africa Foundation,

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