POLICY BRIEF



A Just Energy Transition in Six Oil-Producing Regions: Bringing Local Priorities to Global Climate Action

Colombia, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and Tunisia

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Key messages

- Global oil demand is expected to peak by 2030, and all countries–including low- and middle-income producers–will need to transition away from fossil fuels, with richer countries going first. For oil-dependent economies, the imminent peak in demand poses major risks of loss of revenue and jobs, and unintended socioenvironmental impacts, which might be more heavily felt at the subnational level, widening pre-existing social and environmental injustices rooted in the fossil economy. Significantly, these risks are already materializing in many oil-producing regions in the global South.
- Yet many national and subnational plans in these countries still overlook how to manage the transition beyond oil, leaving countries unprepared.
- A people-powered, just transition in oil-producing regions could provide the means to address these major equity and justice gaps, while also opening opportunities for people and the planet. It could protect local economies and the rights of those most affected by the decline in oil production: workers in both formal and informal sectors, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities and the environment.
- A people-powered, just transition in oil-producing regions would allow climate action to be rooted in the demands and needs of local stakeholders, boosting local and national coalitions in support of international agreements, and to influence them.
- National and subnational governments should define comprehensive plans to build fiscal resilience and reduce oil dependency, while ensuring local economies diversify. The visions and priorities of citizens and communities, especially in oil-producing regions, should be included in those plans through participatory processes and multi-stakeholder dialogue. The international community must provide the technical and financial support needed to help build resilient economic and energy systems beyond oil. Diversification of oil-dependent regions should be part of the just transition agenda.
- National governments, companies and private investors should establish and enforce requirements for a responsible exit in oil-producing countries and regions, involving the active engagement and participation of local authorities and communities. This includes policies and practices around decommissioning, asset transfers, rehabilitation, funds for decommissioning and transition, and socioenvironmental liabilities. Affected communities should be included and compensated, and nature should be protected. A responsible exit should be part of the just transition agenda.
- A just transition in oil-producing regions requires that national and subnational governments, and the international community, provide support to formal and informal workers, women, youth and other often-marginalized groups, to ensure they have the skills and the technical and financial resources to thrive in the process of transitioning away from oil. This means ensuring not only that they benefit from transition policies, but that they have the resources and spaces to be agents for change.

Introduction

In the current urgent need to address climate change, shifting to clean energy and more sustainable economies is central to the required effort. The energy sector is currently responsible for approximately three quarters of greenhouse gas emissions.[1] In this context, international instruments such as the 2015 Paris Agreement commit countries to "making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development."[2]

Most commitments and climate negotiations have focused on emission reductions.[3] However, this started to change with the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). Countries committed to transition towards low-emission energy systems, "including by rapidly scaling up the deployment of clean power generation and energy efficiency measures, including accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition."[4]

This was further reinforced at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), when governments committed to "transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner."[5] Although further policy commitments have since been difficult to advance, market shifts demonstrate that the transition in fossil fuel demand is already in motion. Technological progress has pushed private investments in the clean energy sector up by 42 percent.[6]

Yet in several oil-producing countries and regions, these global shifts and their implications are still not widely understood or integrated into policy discussions, and international dialogue and actions do not recognize the needs of local stakeholders in these regions. This also relates to the fact that the increased investment in the renewable energies sector remains unequally distributed—for example, with only 2 percent landing in Africa, due to policy volatility, ineffective financing mechanisms and high capital cost.[7] Yet Latin American countries—especially Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica—have seen a 25 percent increase in clean energy investments in 2025.[8]

This inconsistency has allowed many oil- and gas-producing countries to remain under the radar in transition debates. The unique challenges and specific needs associated with moving away from oil and gas have not received adequate support. Gaps in research have contributed to a lack of understanding and information about the risks and opportunities for oil-producing regions. More recent research has started to recognize the need for finance to support just transitions in the oil and gas sector, and to move beyond coal.[9] The latest *Just Transition Report* from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) suggests that policy-makers need to address future changes in oil and gas demand.[10] However, processes are not as mature as for coal, and tend to focus on labor and energy access without considering other challenges in producing regions.

This policy brief outlines the critical importance of a just energy transition for oil-producing countries, and identifies risks for local actors, as well as gaps in subnational, national and global policies. It explains how a transition from oil to renewable energy sources can be an opportunity for people and the planet, and provides actionable recommendations to achieve a balanced and equitable approach. These recommendations were informed by a mix of desktop research and an in-person meeting in Cartagena, Colombia, in July 2025, with delegates from oil-producing regions in the global South, as well as a meeting during NY Climate Week in September 2025. The brief profiles six oil-producing countries in the global South—Colombia, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and Tunisia—to identify general trends in the transition process, as well as context-specific factors.

A pressing need in oil-producing regions

Oil-producing countries face rising risks from fossil fuel dependence. Projections by the International Energy Agency (IEA) have indicated that global oil demand could vary from 101 million barrels per day (mb/d) to 103 mb/d by 2030, while production capacity could rise to 8 mb/d by 2030.[11] Growth in demand has been slowing due to increased electric vehicle sales, fuel efficiency, and shifts to gas and renewables, with petrochemicals and aviation now mostly sustaining oil consumption. Fast-developing technologies in green energy solutions such as solar and wind power have made clean energy more competitive and accessible. In the last decade, the demand for energy has increased by 15 percent, with 40 percent of this growth met by clean energy.[12] The challenges to oil production and the growth of clean energy options mean that petrostates could risk losing up to USD 8 trillion by 2040.[13]

From an equity perspective, richer countries that also have more responsibility for pollution should lead the transition away from oil. There have been different proposals about how to define a framework for phasing out fossil fuels according to factors such as wealth, dependency, emissions and maturing oil fields.[14,15] However, in addition to these considerations, oil-producing countries must assess their level of exposure to transition risks. These include economic volatility, stranded assets, job cuts, declining revenues and foreign currency shortfalls that can result in GDP losses and social unrest. Higher levels of state dependency on the oil sector for public revenues or exports, lower levels of economic diversification, and higher levels of inequality can be associated with increased transition risks.

According to the Multidimensional Indicator of Extractives-based Development, it is important to "distinguish between resource abundance (i.e., a high level of natural resource wealth per capita) and resource dependence (i.e., a proportionately high share of natural resource extraction in the economy)."[16]

The latter can be assessed through different indicators, such as contribution to GDP and public revenues, linkages with value chains, share of investment, and foreign exchange earnings. But other contextual factors are also important to consider in a thorough analysis of dependency and transition risks, including levels of debt, fiscal space, concentration of exports in lower numbers of actors, levels of reserves, and carbon intensity of production.

Ghana, Nigeria, Tunisia, Colombia, Mexico and Peru are all middle-income countries, with the first three in the lower-middle ranking and the remainder in the upper-middle.[17] All are marked by structural inequalities and economic dependency on raw materials or low-value exports, but there are also important differences among them. Mexico has a highly diversified national economy and does not depend on oil for foreign currency, whereas Nigeria remains reliant on oil for 80 percent of exports.[18] While Colombia depends heavily on oil and gas for its exports (around 50 percent), oil revenues contribute 2.7 percent to GDP,[19] so it is less dependent on oil revenues than Nigeria, where the oil sector accounts for 6 percent of GDP.[20] Ghana and Peru are less reliant on oil revenues, which have been in steady decline, with revenues from gold and cocoa exports in Ghana, and from copper in Peru, shielding their economies from diminishing oil revenues. In 2021, Peru's oil rents represented 0.25 percent of GDP,[21] whereas although Tunisia has a shrinking oil sector, oil rents represented 1.55 percent of GDP that year.[22]

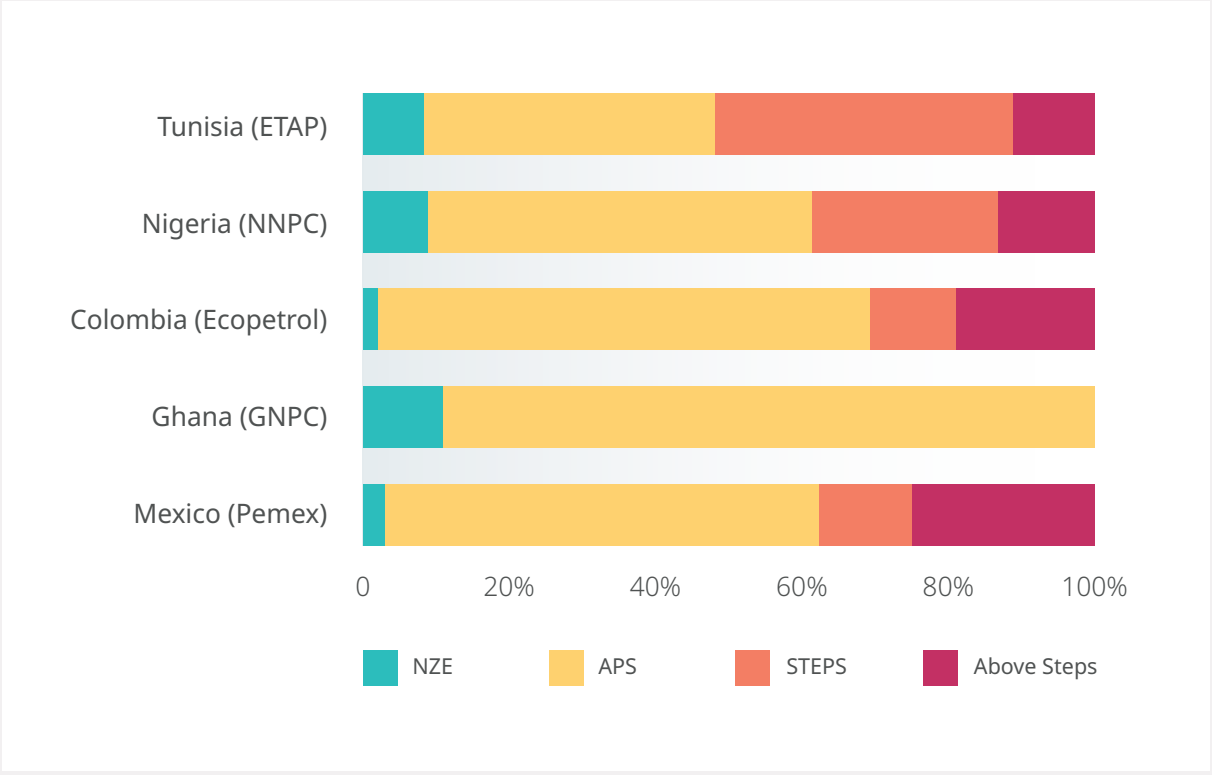
National Oil Companies (NOCs) play a central role in all these economies. In some cases, this increases the level of state income that countries can leverage from oil extraction, but beyond revenue maximization, these companies are often given non-commercial mandates.

They may be subject to domestic political pressure to employ citizens, generate revenues to pay for government programs, supply inexpensive domestic energy, or advance their governments' domestic and foreign policies.[23] Many NOCs are staking significant amounts of public capital on oil extraction without assessing transition risks and taking measures against them, which further increases these countries' potential losses.[24] Mexico's PEMEX is the most indebted NOC, with an estimated $110 billion debt on its balance sheet.[25] However, levels of exposure differ among NOCs. Figure 1 shows the individual exposure of five NOCs in the countries analysed in this brief,[i] highlighting the share of their investment pipelines that would not break even under different IEA scenarios for the energy transition: the Net-Zero Scenario (NZS), the Announced Pledges Scenario (APS) and the Stated Policies Scenario (STEPS).

Notably, the investment pipelines of over a third of major NOCs—including Nigeria's NNPC, Mexico's PEMEX and Tunisia's ETAP—are at risk of their investments failing to break even under the APS.[26]

A more detailed analysis of these indicators is needed to better understand each countries' vulnerability to transition risks. Notably, however, trends for the levels of dependency and for the possible subnational impacts of reductions in global oil demand tend to converge across these countries. Possible oil revenue losses will impact broader society: as national budgets shrink, sectors such as health, education and infrastructure development will receive less funding, and public-sector workers risk losing jobs as governments look to reduce spending. However, these trends can also affect populations in oil-producing regions disproportionally.

Figure 1: Proportion of investment pipelines breaking even in each IEA scenario



Source: Riskier Bets, Smaller Pockets: How National Oil Companies Are Spending Public Money Amid The Energy Transition

i This research did not include Peru's NOC.

Impacts of oil decline at the subnational level

The specific regions where oil production occurs benefit from increased direct and indirect revenues during oil booms, but are also directly impacted by the downturn in the sector and the growth in the clean energy sector. They will therefore face some of the sharpest impacts of the energy transition. Such regions include the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Putumayo in Colombia, Campeche in Mexico, Tataouine in Tunisia, the Tano Basin (off the Western Region) in Ghana and the Amazon region of Loreto in Peru.

In many middle-income oil- and gas-producing countries, subnational governments receive most of their funds as transfers from national governments. A portion of royalties or taxes linked to oil extraction is often allocated to the regions where oil fields are located, making their governments subject to the ebbs and flows of national government revenue allocations, and to the uncertainties of the global energy transition.[27] Local economies, workers and communities—especially women, youth and Indigenous Peoples—are highly vulnerable to shrinking revenues and job losses, as well as to the widening of pre-existing social and environmental injustices rooted in oil extraction.

Although declining oil production is associated not only with international market trends, but also with domestic factors, evidence of oil market volatility impacting oil-producing regions is already apparent, and risks from the global energy transition are starting to materialize—for example:

1. In Colombia's Putumayo region, output decreased by 47.3 percent between 2015 and 2024, and is projected to drop a further 66.5 percent below current production by 2030.[28] The president of Ecopetrol has warned of a possible closure of oilfields whose breakeven price is around $73 per barrel, and has announced that the company will focus on less costly operations.[29] Geopark has also announce a similar strategy in Colombia and Brazil to foster sustainable growth.[30] In this context, the projection of reduced oil revenues is a challenge. The National Department of Planning has estimated that from 2032, oil revenues could fall by 57 percent. This could have a considerable impact on economic and social investment in the region.

2. Recent figures confirm that oil production in Tunisia is in decline. National crude oil output dropped by 9 percent[31] from 2024 to 2025, while new solar energy capacity is developing without a clear agenda for inclusion and social justice.

3. In Nigeria, between 55 percent and 92 percent[32] of the total budget in Niger Delta states was financed by oil and oil-derived revenues as of 2023. When global oil prices fall, these states can face steep fiscal shortfalls, leading to unpaid public-sector wages, stalled infrastructure development and cuts in essential services. Subnational governments face significant revenue risks from declining oil income,[33] while redundancies in multinational oil companies and service firms in oil hubs drive up unemployment. The Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative recently warned that layoffs of workers have been found to contribute towards crude oil theft.[34]

4. The Mexican state of Campeche—home to the country's most significant oil hubs, the Ku-Maloob-Zaap/Cantarell offshore fields—has seen a steady decline in production. Mexico's crude output dropped 44 percent in the period 2000–2004,[35]meaning state fiscal transfers tied to oil have fallen sharply, constraining public spending and undermining infrastructure, social programs and local development. The decline also led to widespread job losses in 2024 in Campeche and other oil-producing areas,[36] not just in refineries but across services, logistics

and secondary sectors previously reliant on spending by oil workers. Local economies in areas like Ciudad del Carmen[37] have suffered, with rising unemployment and migration, particularly among young people seeking opportunities elsewhere.

5. Oil extraction in the Peruvian Amazon has been also declining, with production in some oilfields paralyzed in 2023 due to license expiry or dissolution. With heavy oil, high operation costs and increasing social conflicts, investment in the region's oil sector has remained low.[38]

6. There remains interest in licensing and exploration in Ghana's Tano Basin, but production from older discoveries has slowed down. In the first half of 2025, production fell by 26 percent compared to the same period in 2024, reflecting a declining trend since 2019.[39] Along with recent reductions in oil revenue, this has been identified as a significant source of vulnerability.[40]

Besides revenue decline, some stakeholders have raised concerns about the socioenvironmental impacts of the industry, which can be overlooked. Examples include:

1. Over 1,460[41] oil spills have taken place in Loreto, Peru's Amazonian oil-producing department, since 1997.

2. Coastal communities in Ghana—especially those dependent on fisheries—impacted as the oil industry restricts access to traditional fishing grounds or acquires farmlands in Ellembelle district and Sanzule.[42]

3. Oil extraction in Peru's Putumayo region threatens the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous Amazon communities.[43]

4. Mexico's Campeche region faces pollution of water sources and agricultural land, due to offshore drilling that has threatened the livelihoods of small-scale fishers and coastal communities.[44]

5. Nigerian communities have denounced the long-term pollution in the Niger Delta,[45] as major oil firms transfer their assets to local companies without clarity over cleaning-up responsibilities. The region has seen the acquisition of onshore oil sites by local companies as international oil companies move their activities offshore. The Stakeholder Democracy Network reports that local companies care even less about damages caused by oil exploration, and that the "offloading" of aging assets to local owners makes it more difficult to hold oil companies accountable for the damages caused by increased oil spills and gas flaring.[46]

While the effects of declining oil revenues on subnational regions are specific to each context, there are clear commonalities in how oil production has shaped local communities and the risks they now face. These risks are interconnected and span social, economic and environmental dimensions. Job losses are not limited to those working in oil fields and refineries. The impact extends along the value chain and includes secondary industries that have thrived or supported households based on income from the oil industry—for example, small businesses, often run by women. Job losses can also lead to psychological impacts and gender-based violence.[47] As oil revenues decline, workers and subsidies to the community are at risk, undermining the social services and public infrastructure essential for a just transition.[48,49] In many countries where national oil companies subsidise social services, declining revenues mean women are already bearing the brunt of disappearing funding, as they take on extra caring roles, or are deprived of support they need for their families.[50] This makes gender-sensitive economic diversification critical.

Environmental degradation further compounds this situation. As oil production declines, inadequate remediation of decommissioned infrastructure and oil-contaminated zones raises additional socioenvironmental risks, leaving communities vulnerable to long-term ecological damage. Often engaged in fish processing, informal trade and household-level food production, women are disproportionately affected by the collapse of both natural resource–based livelihoods and oil-driven local economies.

Current transition efforts

Despite the significance of these challenges in terms of equity and justice, most global and local discussions about a just transition overlook the specific needs of oil-producing regions. As part of their climate commitments and policies, many countries have started to increase energy transition efforts, but these refer mostly to reducing emissions or increasing investment in renewable energies. Many have not defined plans or roadmaps to manage the very probable future decline in global oil demand, and the challenges of their own economies linked to this global energy transition. Nor have they established specific plans for a just transition in oil-producing regions.

Since 2022, the uncertainty brought by international wars, geopolitical tensions and changes in the discourse of major world leaders have prompted numerous policy-makers to consider the transition as slowing down. Many countries and NOCs are relying on being among the last producers of oil for the global market, and remain highly unprepared to face the transition risks, having delayed or limited planning beyond oil.[51] According to the World Benchmarking Alliance assessment of 100 national and international oil companies, most do not have clear plans and programs for a just transition.

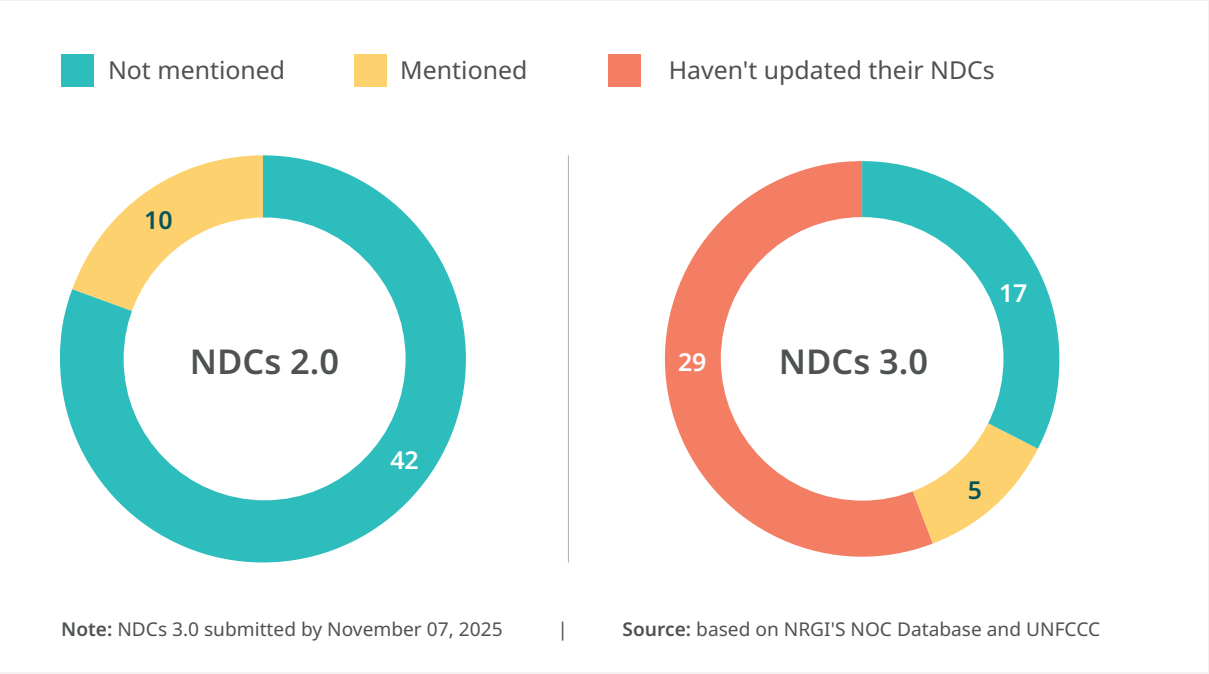
As the cornerstone of climate policy under the Paris Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) would be expected to include measures to manage current or future declines in oil output and foster a just transition in oil-producing regions.

However, although the six countries covered in this brief have demonstrated some climate leadership and their NDCs have improved over time, their plans for addressing reduced oil production remain insufficient. Some include commitments to reduce emissions related to fossil fuel production— for example, from methane or flaring—but omit strategies for transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner as mandated during COP28. Subsidy reform is rarely mentioned, despite its importance for aligning fiscal incentives with transition goals.[52] NOCs and their vital role in a just transition also tend to be absent from most NDCs. Figure 2 illustrates the limited inclusion of NOCs in climate pledges.

Only 10 countries mentioned their NOC in any form, including as a passing reference, in their second-generation NDC, also known as NDC 2.0: Azerbaijan, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Oman, Mexico, Qatar, the UAE and Venezuela. In the current wave of NDC 3.0 updates, only five countries have done so to date: Azerbaijan, Angola, Bangladesh, the UAE, and Venezuela.[53]

The UNFCCC's 2025 report on just transitions in NDCs found that references to a "just transition" have increased, but remain superficial. They are often confined to job creation in clean energy, with little discussion of fiscal risks, a responsible exit or regional justice.[54]

Figure 2: How many countries mention their NOCs in their NDCs?



Note: NDCs 3.0 submitted by November 07, 2025 | **Source:** based on NRGI'S NOC Database and UNFCCC

Table 1 provides an overview of the approach to oil in just transition planning by the six oil-producing countries, with further explanation below.

Table 1: Countries' approach to oil production in the energy transition

Country	Energy Transition Plan as of 2025	Position on Oil
Colombia	Roadmap for a Just Energy Transition, and National Development Plan 2022–2026	No new exploration; focus on diversification and reindustrialization
Ghana	National Energy Transition Framework 2022–2070 and Energy Transition and Investment Plan	Oil production stable in the short term; gas as a bridge away from fossil fuel output
Mexico	Energy Planning and Transition Law and 2025–2030 National Development Plan	No oil strategy; focus on electricity only
Nigeria	Energy Transition Plan, Just Transition Roadmap, and Nigeria's Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy – 2060	Oil and gas remain central—used to finance transition
Peru	National Energy Plan 2014–2025[55]	Reduce hydrocarbon imports, promote oil and gas exploration, expand gas distribution
Tunisia	National Strategy for the Development of Green Hydrogen and its Derivatives in Tunisia, and Tunisian Energy Transition Strategy 2025–2035	Renewables-driven; no oil directive



Colombia

Colombia[56] has taken decisive steps to align its economic development model with global climate objectives. The government has halted the signing of new coal, oil and gas exploration contracts, marking a significant departure from traditional reliance on fossil fuel industries. This de facto phase-down is especially impactful in oil-rich regions such as Meta and Casanare, where ongoing operations continue only under existing contracts. The shift underscores Colombia's commitment to regional economic diversification, aligned with public policy efforts toward reindustrialization and the pursuit of sustainable revenue streams, including external climate finance. The national agenda emphasizes labor reforms, the promotion of green jobs, and the development of sectoral roadmaps to guide the energy transition.

These measures are complemented by policies such as tax breaks for renewable energy, and planning efforts for the closure of coal mines, ensuring that just transition principles are at the core of Colombia's climate governance architecture. Commitments have been made to green jobs and national retraining efforts, as outlined in the NDC, aimed at supporting workforce diversification. Analysts emphasize the need for regional transition plans specifically tailored to oil municipalities, rather than focusing solely on coal-dependent areas. Meaningful social dialogue is required with communities such as Puerto Gaitán, in the department of Meta, where oil royalties are a major component of local budgets.



Ghana

The National Energy Transition Framework (NETF) 2022–2070[57] prioritizes energy security and affordability and decarbonization, positioning natural gas as a "transition fuel" to replace coal, with plans for further integration of renewables over time. While there is an acknowledgment of the decline in oil, the NEFT is not explicit over the phasing-out of fossil fuels. Instead, the framework emphasizes managed decline and fiscal resilience. The shrinkage of Ghana's oil sector is framed as an eventual certainty, highlighting the importance of strategic planning for the future.



Mexico

Mexico's 2024 energy reform created a legal framework to boost energy security, self-sufficiency and sovereignty, introducing energy justice and prioritizing the energy transition. The new Law on Energy Planning and Transition (LPTE) of March 2025 establishes binding planning for the sector and regulates the obligations of its participants.[58] Although it does not set quantitative targets, it mandates the creation of new planning instruments such as the National Energy Transition Strategy (to replace the 2024 version) and the Plan for the Energy Transition and Sustainable Use of Energy, both pending publication. The new framework still prioritizes clean energy technologies and improvements in energy efficiency to decarbonize electricity generation.[59] The LPTE calls for a Hydrocarbons Sector Development Plan, aligned with the forthcoming strategy, which marks a shift by formally including this sector in energy transition planning—though without requiring specific transition targets (unlike for the electricity sector).

Until both documents are published, it remains unclear whether extraction activities will face long-term transition goals. However, given current objectives to sustain and increase hydrocarbon production for energy security, the transition framework is unlikely to affect upstream oil extraction in the near term. Oil production continues to play a crucial role in Mexico's economy through the operations of PEMEX and significant fiscal contributions. As a result, broader challenges related to oil dependency remain unresolved, even as the country's energy mix evolves. Current policy reflects a dual approach, setting transition goals such as promoting self-sufficiency through expanded hydrocarbons and petrochemical production, while simultaneously advocating for a renewable energy transition under the banner of sovereignty. Mexico has enacted comprehensive climate legislation and set renewable energy targets, but still lacks a formal policy for a just energy transition. While energy justice is now a guiding principle, no mechanisms exist to ensure equitable outcomes for oil-dependent or vulnerable communities.

Nigeria

Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan (ETP)[60] and its Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy – 2060[61] set a goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2060, making this one of the most thorough approaches to the energy transition among emerging economies. While oil and gas remain central to Nigeria's revenues, especially for financing and energy access, the ETP acknowledges their role as transitional enablers. The Energy Transition Plan outlines strategies for power, transport, oil and gas, cooking and industry, with a strong focus on equity, employment and energy access. Although Nigeria is not explicitly phasing out oil production, its transition planning recognizes that a global decline in oil demand will acutely impact the Niger Delta. The overarching policy challenge is to reinvest oil revenues into sustainable community development, environmental restoration and non-oil economies, aimed at ensuring long-term resilience before traditional revenues diminish. However, the focus on gas as a transition fuel could lead to increased methane emissions, which would have a detrimental impact on the environment and vulnerable communities.

Peru

Peru's National Energy Policy 2010–2040[62] outlines broad strategies aimed at improving efficiency and promoting diversification within the energy sector. However, the policy lacks a structured, actionable plan for energy transition and replacing fossil fuels with clean energy solutions. As of mid-2024, Peru remained at the conceptual stage, with no specific commitments or detailed planning for the energy transition. While it does not yet have an official definition of a just transition, nor a formal national policy to achieve this, the country has begun to engage in foundational discussions. In recent years, Peru has made slow progress on its climate policy, which has been impeded by political instability under its current leadership.

While the share of renewable energy is growing, with plans for green hydrogen and new government auctions for renewables licensing, fossil fuel investments persist, including an agreement reached with international oil companies for exploration of three offshore blocks in 2026.[63] The absence of a national energy transition plan also exacerbates existing environmental challenges. In regions such as the Peruvian Amazon,[ii] affected by decades of oil production, the lack of adequate regulation for environmental remediation and the responsible decommissioning of oil blocks has left communities exposed to ongoing contamination and uncertainty. Without a coherent policy framework linking the energy transition to environmental repair and social justice, these gaps risk perpetuating the same extractive model under a new guise.

Tunisia

Tunisia is charting an ambitious course towards a long-term clean energy transition, anchored in the rapid development of solar and wind projects. The country's electricity generation is overwhelmingly dependent on gas (over 95.8 percent in 2022), while renewables including hydropower, solar and wind currently make up only about 3 percent of the total. Policy-wise, Tunisia has developed the Energy Strategy 2035,[64] which provides a roadmap for the country's decarbonization efforts, and aims to facilitate a move away from fossil fuel dependence to clean energy, addressing both environmental and economic concerns. Currently, Tunisia imports 62 percent of the natural gas it uses for electricity generation, so reducing fossil fuel use will also provide significant economic relief by gradually decreasing costly gas imports. Tunisia has published a preliminary draft of its updated NDCs.

The NDC 3.0 covers the period 2026–2035, and commits to reducing the country's carbon emissions by 31 percent by 2035.[65]

ii More than 700 oil spills have been recorded since 1997 in Loreto, Peru's main Amazonian oil-producing department, with severe impacts on ecosystems and communities.

Just transitions in oil-producing regions: An opportunity for people and the planet

A people-powered, just transition in oil-producing regions offers the means to address these major equity and justice gaps, while also opening opportunities for people and the planet. It could protect local economies and the rights of those most affected by the decline in oil production: workers in both formal and informal sectors, women, youth, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and the environment. Such a transition in oil-producing regions would allow climate action to be rooted in the demands and needs of local stakeholders, boosting local and national coalitions in support of international agreements, and to influence them. This could make climate action more legitimate and resilient. As national and local actors demand support for their economies, this could also create a political opportunity to drive the transition.

To ensure a people-powered, just transition, it is important that the transition process offers new equitable and sustainable pathways to prosperity for these regions. This includes economic and development opportunities, but also measures to address the legacies of extraction and avoid new extractive dependencies. Such a just transition would prevent greater inequalities and acknowledge feelings of loss among citizens and communities who have provided the world with energy for decades.

The agenda of a just and well-governed transition for oil-producing regions needs to reflect national and local contexts, and adapt to them. Through the work of NRGI and partners,[iii] we have observed general trends across geographies and identified four critical issues, which give rise to key recommendations to support a just transition in oil-producing regions:[iv]

1. Build fiscal resilience

Given high levels of dependency on oil revenues at the subnational level, local governments need to build fiscal resilience, with support from national governments and the international community. This can be done through different tools, depending on the opportunities in each region, but examples include:

- **Fiscal scenario planning.** As price volatility increases and oil production declines, national and local governments need to acknowledge and assess risks, identifying possible oil revenue scenarios linked to global and national conditions. This could allow local actors to better plan to ensure local economies and social services are protected, and encourage governments to align fiscal commitments and plans with transition objectives. NRGI-Nigeria together with its partner Policy Alert[66] have been organizing capacity development workshops with subnational actors to explore strategies to integrate fiscal prudence and transition considerations into short- and long-term planning. To enable this, clarity about transition plans from oil companies operating in such regions is vital. This is aligned with the new EITI standard that requires governments and companies to make project-level disclosures of actual and projected production levels.[67]
- **Revenue management.** Managing revenues wisely is a central pillar of resource governance and ensuring that oil extraction translates into positive development outcomes.[68] As revenues decline, this becomes even more important. In many

iii These include AIDA, CIDER, CCIS, CCJ, DAR, Policy Alert, RATÉJ, SEI, SYND and others.
iv These recommendations were agreed when NRGI and partners convened in Cartagena, Colombia in July 2025. The meeting focused on people-powered energy transitions in the oil-producing regions of Colombia, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and Tunisia.

cases, oil revenues will continue flowing for more than a decade, and allocating these revenues strategically and equitably can enable a just transition. This means defining clear spending priorities and avoiding debt, and could include stabilizing budgets in certain cases, through saving funds or mechanisms. It also requires consideration of risks when investing in oil assets. Examples of revenue management in the global South include the sovereign wealth fund created in 2019 by the Brazilian state of Espirito Santo, where important offshore oil extraction is located. This could be a key tool for managing future oil decline.[69]

- **Citizen oversight.** Enhanced transparency and citizen oversight of public budgets are key to increasing accountability and reducing possible mismanagement of oil revenues. In Nigeria, Policy Alert has promoted an Open Budget Snapshot Campaign,[70] focused on demystifying budgets, so that citizens can understand how funds are allocated and hold government officials accountable for public expenditure.
- **Alternative sources of public revenue.** Since the challenges of oil-producing regions include oil dependency and a reluctance to establish a comprehensive tax base while oil rents fill the public purse, identifying alternative sources of public revenues is key to a stable transition. This can involve local economic diversification, as well as mobilization of other national and international revenue sources. For example, Colombia's Putumayo oil-producing region could increase investment for bigger strategic projects if the authorities combined and strategically allocated oil royalties together with other national revenue streams.[71] It is also worth noting that, since recovered methane has commercial value and can offset climate change mitigation costs, it can generate potential revenues in the short term.[72]

2. Foster inclusive diversification

Closely linked to building fiscal resilience, national and local stakeholders should promote the sustainable, inclusive diversification of local economies. This could include:

- **Identify and develop new sectors.** With clear consideration of inclusion and sustainability, stakeholders should explore the potential of alternative economic sectors, such as renewable energies and emerging technologies. Ghana's government has pledged to create 400,000 green jobs by 2060, while Tunisia is already developing green energy solutions with a particular emphasis on solar power and green hydrogen. Between 2021 and 2035, the country's transition plans could generate 70,000 new energy jobs[73] across the value chain, from manufacturing to installation and maintenance. In the region of Tatouine, expanding the renewable energy sector is part of a plan to diversify the local economy, with the shift to a green economy offering opportunity to develop novel economic models, rather than replicating extractive approaches in new sectors. Communities from Tatouine[74] to La Guajira[75]are demanding that green energy technology does not replace the exploitative models of the oil sector.
- **Build on local capacities and resources.** Lessons from how communities have faced previous crises in oil prices or production can suggest possibilities for economic diversification. A presentation by *Cohesion Comunitaria e Innovación Social* [v] highlights that communities in Campeche, Mexico, have survived previous crises by returning to fishing, agriculture, eco-tourism and the care economy. Local capacity also includes former workers from the oil and gas industry, who are generally highly skilled and able to move to renewable industries with little reskilling.

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- **Ensure National Oil Companies define just transition plans.** State ownership of NOCs could facilitate ambitious, coordinated action for a just transition at the local level by integrating social protections, reskilling programs, and investments in clean energy or diversification programs.

3. Regulate for a responsible exit

As companies phase down or phase out oil extraction in certain regions, it is important to prevent social and environmental liabilities left behind by the industry, which could affect communities and result in abandoned infrastructure and an unresolved ecological debt. For this, national governments, companies (including NOCs) and private investors should establish and enforce requirements for a responsible exit in oil-producing countries and regions. A responsible exit is an obligation both for state and private-sector institutions. State actors must put in place appropriate regulations and hold companies accountable, while the private sector must define high social and environmental standards and fulfil the resulting obligations. Both need to ensure meaningful engagement by citizens and communities, guaranteeing human rights. Failing to undertake such an approach would not only affect stakeholders in oil-producing regions, but would also potentially expose the state and companies to costly penalties[76] resulting from a rise in strategic litigation in this domain. Various initiatives are attempting to propose principles for a responsible exit. Key elements to consider include:[77]

1. **Access to information and disclosure about socioenvironmental impacts.** Besides access to public documents related to environmental licences and any monitoring reports, this includes information about past pollution events and remediation efforts. For example, after years of demands from local communities, Peru's environmental evaluation and oversight body has assessed the environmental liabilities caused by oil extraction in the country, including in the region of Loreto.[78] Concrete measures for remediation or reparation now need to follow.
2. **Access to remedy and reparations for people and nature.** Environmental damage caused by oil extraction and related operations must be remedied and repaired. Harms caused to local people's lands, health or livelihoods must also be addressed. This might require the definition of remediation and restoration plans, as well as the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to meaningfully engage local communities, especially affected populations. Authorities and companies should consider community-led, territorial approaches, including culturally appropriate reparations. In Ghana, for example, impacts of oil extraction on fishing communities would need to be part of any remediation plan.
3. **Decommissioning and just transition plans.** States should establish clear and strong legal frameworks for project closure and the removal of oil infrastructure. These plans should be mandated from the inception of a project. They could include technical and financial aspects of project closure, but should also involve a clear assessment of the social and environmental consequences of the abandoned infrastructure, and specific measures to address them. Together with obligations for decommissioning, it is important that the state requires companies to develop just transition plans. The World Benchmarking Alliance[79] suggests that such plans should engage different stakeholders in social dialogue, create decent green jobs and reskill workers, include social impact assessments, and guarantee social protection. It is key that plans help to ensure human rights are respected and inequalities are addressed, rather than worsened.
4. **Funding for a responsible exit.** Financing mechanisms must be created for a responsible exit that ensures restoration and a just transition. Decommissioning regulation should, and in many cases does, require the establishment of funds so that the costs of rehabilitation and decommissioning are provided for, and do not become a liability for taxpayers. Nigeria's decommissioning regulations require companies to establish a decommissioning fund within 90 days of the start of production for new licences, and within

90 days of the regulations' coming into force for existing licences.[80] However, enforcement must be ensured.

5. **Responsible exit principles for asset transfers.** Stakeholders must address environmental, social and governance challenges when petroleum assets change hands. To prevent the sale of assets to incompetent actors, governments should take measures, including:

   - requiring state approval of deals, to ensure buyers have sufficient capacity and high standards
   - mandate transparency to allow public oversight and accountability, including to host communities
   - strengthen regulations to address issues arising from transfers and wind-downs, including emissions management and reporting, and funding for decommissioning
   - require NOCs to make adequate disclosures about their acquisitions, to ensure they manage risks to the public purse.

NRGI and Carbon Tracker's *Responsible Exit Principles for Oil and Gas Companies* set out best practices to help companies manage financial, legal, environmental and reputational risks during asset transfers.

4. Strengthen governance and community empowerment

Finally, a just transition in oil-producing regions requires that national and subnational governments, and the international community, provide support to formal and informal workers, women, youth and other often-marginalized communities, to ensure they have the skills and the technical and financial resources to thrive in the transition process. This entails not just ensuring they benefit from transition policies, but that they have the resources and spaces to be agents for change.

A well-governed energy transition must ensure access to information, inclusive planning and meaningful participation by stakeholders, from local to global, at the different stages of decision-making.[81] Government, companies and civil society should make sure that citizens and communities in oil-producing regions have both the opportunity and the space to engage, present their views and influence decisions. Processes should be gender-sensitive, youth-centred and intercultural, with respect for knowledge, traditions and collective rights. This requires the protection of civic space and safeguards for environmental defenders. It also requires multi-stakeholder dialogues to foster exchange among different actors at the local level; consideration of potential opportunities for these regions, and synergies among the public and private sectors and the international community. This could include the use of media and storytelling to amplify marginalized voices, and development of local-level monitoring mechanisms to hold governments and companies accountable.

Each region must define which specific groups need special attention to ensure a just transition that addresses persistent inequalities, though all should consider workers, women, youth and Indigenous communities:

- **Workers:** A just approach would need to involve reskilling and upskilling programs, provide alternative employment opportunities, and ensure social protections for workers and their families. Creating opportunities for new workstreams is key. In Nigeria, the Energy Transition Plan estimates that by following its net-zero pathway, the country will add 340,000 jobs by 2030 and 840,000 by 2060.[82]
- **Youth:** Young people bring a different perspective to developing new economic models and can be key drivers of change and innovation. This makes it important to institutionalize youth participation in transition policy frameworks and create platforms for young people to envisage post-oil futures. Useful approaches include providing financing opportunities for youth-led green enterprises, and embedding climate

and energy education into curricula.[83] The inclusion of young people improves legitimacy and durability of transition choices in oil-producing regions. In Campeche, Mexico, both youth and educational institutions demonstrate a strong commitment to shaping new pathways for their communities—as shown by their active participation in the Local Conference of Youth.[84]

- **Women:** A just transition in oil-producing regions needs to integrate gender-sensitive plans and budgets, ensuring women's participation and leadership is substantive, not symbolic. This requires targeted training, reskilling and social safety nets for women affected by the transition. A gender-just transition in oil-producing regions requires action from governments, state-owned and private oil companies, and civil society to ensure that women—whether in informal roles, peripheral communities or oil companies—are fully included and represented in decision-making and compensation processes at all levels, from local to national.[85.]
- **Indigenous Peoples:** A just transition should protect Indigenous People's right to give or withhold free, prior and informed consent to all transition-related projects, and should ensure they are represented in planning and budgeting for a just transition.



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Conclusion

Transitioning away from fossil fuels is a global commitment and a market trend, but whether it becomes an opportunity for shared prosperity or a source of new inequalities depends on how it is governed. For oil-producing countries and regions, the energy transition is not simply an environmental imperative—it is an economic and social transformation that must be managed with foresight, inclusion and justice. The experiences of Colombia, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and Tunisia show that while the pace and nature of transition vary between countries, the underlying challenges of dependency, inequality and environmental degradation are shared.

A people-powered, just transition offers a path to address these challenges holistically. It can help countries build fiscal resilience, diversify local economies, ensure responsible exits from oil extraction, and empower communities to participate meaningfully in decision-making.

Achieving this requires aligning national and subnational policies with the principles of equity and sustainability, ensuring that no region or social group is left behind.

International cooperation and finance must also evolve to meet the realities faced by oil-dependent economies. The same urgency that drives global commitments to phase out fossil fuels must be matched with support for those regions whose livelihoods and public revenues are most at risk. This includes creating new mechanisms for climate finance that prioritize a just transition in oil-producing regions, strengthening transparency and accountability, and enabling South–South collaboration to share lessons and build collective resilience.

Ultimately, a just transition for oil-producing regions is about more than replacing one source of energy with another—it is about redefining development itself. By centering people, justice and sustainability, countries can transform potential crisis into opportunity, ensuring that the move away from oil becomes a cornerstone of a fairer, more inclusive and climate-resilient global future.



Photo by Omar Lucas for NRGI

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About NRGI

The Natural Resource Governance Institute is an independent, non-profit organization that supports informed, inclusive decision-making about natural resources and the energy transition. We partner with reformers in government and civil society to design and implement just policies based on evidence and the priorities of citizens in resource-rich developing countries. Learn more at **www.resourcegovernance.org**



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