



SOUTH AFRICA'S CLIMATE REALITY AND FUTURE RISKS

A diplomatic and justice-centred view for COP31

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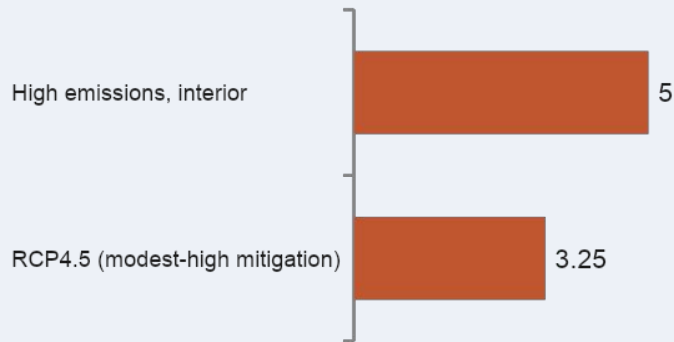
THE CLIMATE REALITY: TEMPERATURE

South Africa is heating up, unequally



- Mean, maximum and minimum temperatures are all rising.
- By 2080 to 2099, warming above 4°C is likely across the whole interior.
- Above 6°C is plausible over western, central and northern parts.
- Very hot days above 35°C and heatwaves are increasing sharply.

Projected interior warming



Even under modest-high mitigation, the interior warms 2.5 to 4°C. Heat is not abstract: heat-stress claims are already reaching labour forums.

Projections after CSIR / CMIP6 downscaled scenarios for South Africa.

THE CLIMATE REALITY: RAINFALL AND WATER

A country of extremes: drier west, wetter east



Drying west

- Strong drying over the south-west: over 40 mm/year less.
- Western Cape and Northern Cape are the drought hotspots.



Wetting east

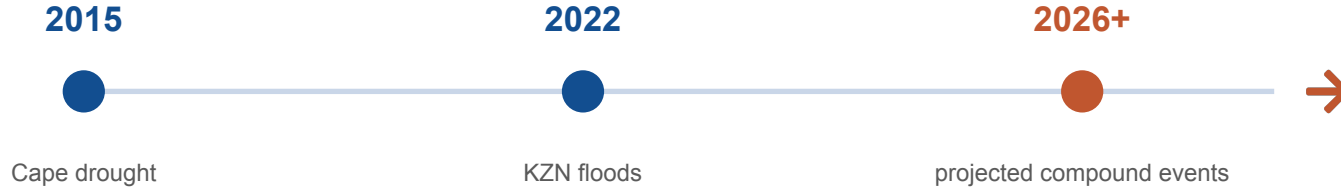
- More extreme rain (over 20 mm in 24h) over the east in summer.
- Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KZN are the flood hotspots.

Heavy-rainfall days could rise by 5 to 40 days in the far future under high emissions.

Rainfall projections after CSIR climate risk profiling for South Africa.

THE PHYSICAL REALITY: COMPOUND RISKS

When drought meets flood meets fire



Fire danger days rising over the north-east, Cape south coast and south-western Cape.



Sea-level rise and more frequent storms threaten coastal infrastructure.



El Niño and La Niña cycles intensifying: severe drought, then floods.



Rain-fed agriculture under threat, with direct food-security implications.

In climate diplomacy this is 'loss and damage'. The IEJ framework asks: who pays for it?

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITY

Climate risk has a postal code



Small-scale farmers

60% of the Sub-Saharan population, facing lower yields.



Informal settlements

In flood-prone areas with limited basic services.



Coal communities

Mpumalanga faces climate impacts and transition job losses.



Youth

Around 45% unemployment meets climate vulnerability.



Women and care workers

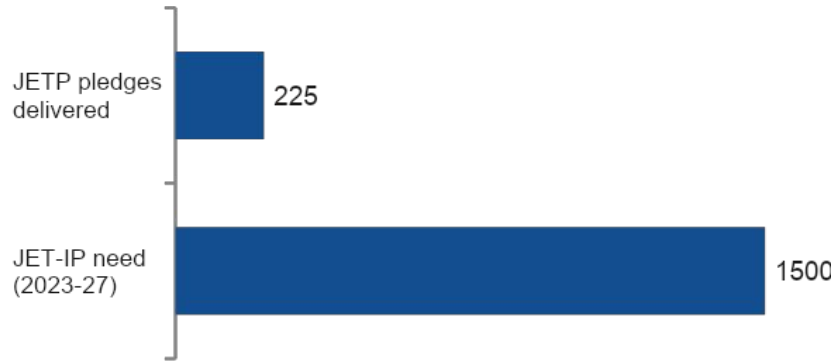
Carry a disproportionate share of the adaptation burden.

The people who contributed least will feel it first and worst. As youth, you sit in that intersection.

THE FINANCE REALITY

The R1.5 trillion question

Energy transition: need vs delivered



R131bn

tracked annual finance
(2019-21), under a third
of the R334-535bn needed

86.5%

of tracked finance is
private; only 13.5%
is public

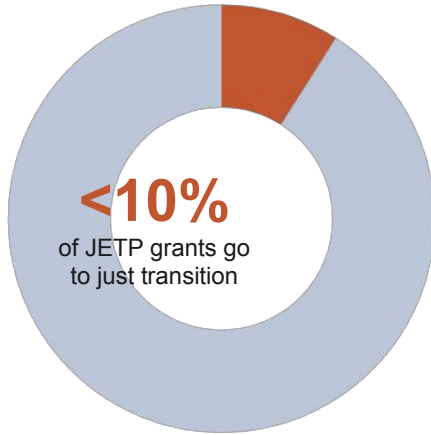
75% of total finance is debt, and concessional loans are shrinking.

\$12.8 billion is a fraction of what the energy sector alone requires, and most of it is debt, not grants.

JET-IP (2022); JETP pledges; Presidential Climate Commission; Climate finance landscape (2019-21).

THE JETP CRITIQUE

Who benefits? Who pays? Who decides?



- JET-IP prioritises private funding and de-risking over public-good provision.
- Privately owned renewable infrastructure risks high user fees.
- Only about \$70m of \$764m pledged in grants is directed to just-transition objectives.
- The R131bn social commitment for workers and communities is not reflected in project timelines.
- Most projects end 2025-2027, risking an implementation gap beyond.

In diplomatic language: the transition is underfunded, over-financialised and under-democratised.

IEJ and COSATU, worker-centred framework (2025); JETP grant allocation data.

THE IEJ / COSATU FRAMEWORK

A worker-centred framework for financing the just transition

- Developed by the [IEJ and COSATU](#), August 2025.
- Built on COSATU's 2022 Just Transition Blueprint for Workers.
- Core claim: the just transition is a public good, non-excludable and non-rivalrous.

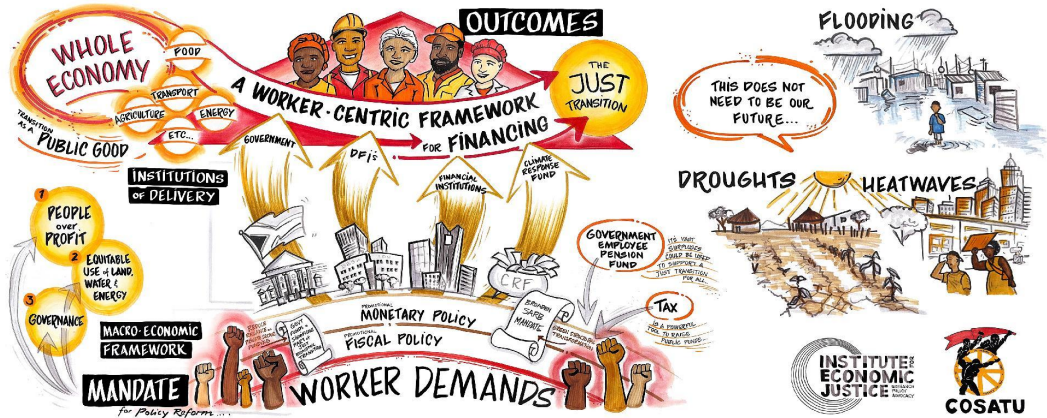
The 'house':

Foundation = worker demands

Steps = fiscal then monetary policy

Pillars = government, DFIs, financial institutions, Climate Response Fund

Roof = worker-centric alternative financing



IEJ and COSATU, a worker-centred framework for financing the just transition (2025).

FOUNDATION: WORKER DEMANDS

What workers are actually asking for



1

People over profit

Employment creation, upskilling and reskilling, relocation support, decent-work packages, a basic income grant.



2

Equitable use of resources

Fair provision of land, water and energy, and access to basic services.



3

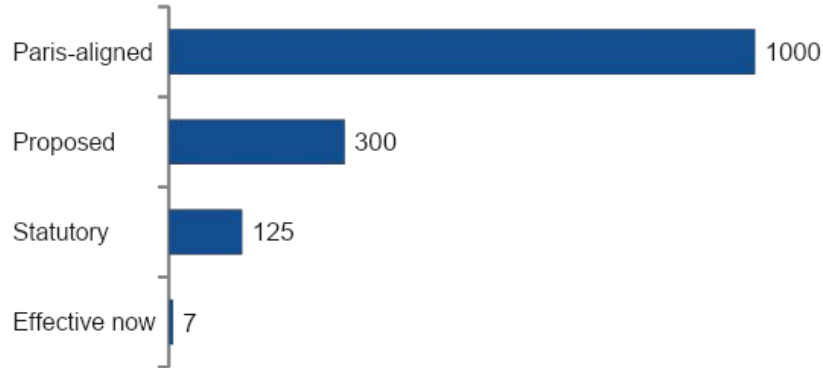
Governance

End corruption, use carbon-tax revenue for the transition, end budget austerity.

COSATU Just Transition Blueprint for Workers (2022).

Assertive fiscal policy for a just transition

Carbon price: rand per tonne



Climate Response Fund (CRF)

- A pseudo-sovereign wealth fund earning about R100bn a year.
- Funded by carbon tax (to an effective R100/ton), green bonds and a wealth tax on extractive sectors.
- Green bonds: R100bn a year for 2026/27, on a slower fiscal glide path.

Statutory rate R125/ton, effective rate about R7 because of exemptions to 2030. That is a transition in name only.

Proposed vs Paris-aligned rates are illustrative; effective/statutory rates after IMF and National Treasury.

Promotional monetary policy: credit for the climate

The critique

- SARB mandate: price and financial stability, plus balanced and sustainable growth.
- Inflation targeting since 2000 has favoured speculative finance over jobs and industry.
- Climate change itself drives inflation: oil, food, a volatile rand, disaster costs.

The proposals

- Review the inflation-targeting framework.
- Mandate 2 to 10% of gross lending to just-transition projects.
- Cut offshore limits for retirement funds; redirect to onshore green assets.
- Climate-risk stress-testing for financial institutions.

If climate change threatens sustainable growth, should the Reserve Bank not actively finance its mitigation? A question for the audience today.

DFIS AS DELIVERY INSTITUTIONS

Development finance: from profit to purpose

Now

- Commercial and risk-averse
- Short-term horizons
- Profit-first mandate



Proposed

- Patient capital, below-market rates
- Long-term, higher public-good value
- Green industrialisation, localisation, worker transition

R10bn

R2.2tn

DFI climate finance in 2023, under 1% of the total in DFI assets: a domestic pool, not Paris or tracked Washington

IEJ and COSATU (2025). IDC is the largest DFI; DFI asset base per National Treasury.

THE YOUTH INTERSECTION

Youth are more than future workers

45%

Youth unemployment: the transition will define your working lives

- Green-jobs rhetoric vs reality: most JETP funding goes to green hydrogen and electricity infrastructure, not job creation.
- Skills programmes exist but are short-term, donor-dependent and ending by 2027.
- The framework's demands (decent work, reskilling, a basic income) shape youth entry into the labour market.
- Climate education and youth participation remain underfunded priorities.

You are not 'future leaders'. Youth are the workforce the green economy will hire, or not hire, now. Built on private profit and public debt, you inherit the bill. Built on public goods and worker rights, you inherit the opportunity.

THE COP31 ASK

From this room to COP31: the youth diplomatic agenda

-  **1 Finance reform.** \$1.3tn by 2035 must include grant-based, non-debt finance for the just transition.
-  **2 NDC credibility.** A path to a revised NDC 4.0 aligned with worker-centred transition plans, not only targets.
-  **3 Domestic public finance.** Establish the Climate Response Fund with ring-fenced carbon-tax revenue.
-  **4 DFI reform.** Mandate minimum thresholds for just transition and youth employment.

Ask for different money: grants not loans, public not private, accountable not opaque.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY FRAME

Youth climate indicators: from promises to proof



Finance

Is climate finance reaching workers and youth, not just megaprojects?



Jobs

Are green jobs decent, permanent and open to young people?



Participation

Are youth in decision-making, not only in consultation?



Services

Is energy, water and land access improving in coal regions?



Education

Is climate literacy built into TVET and higher education?

The framework gives the policy architecture; the indicators give the accountability mechanism. Together they turn a statement into a binding social contract.

THE URGENCY

2026 gets real, or gets lost

2025
G20 chair

2025
NDC revision due

2026
JET-IP midpoint

2026
GNU first year



USA withdrawal from JETP (Feb 2025): a gap of over \$1bn and a political signal.



Municipalities receive under 10% of climate finance, though they deliver on the frontline.



Without course correction, South Africa risks a shallow transition: import substitution, no jobs, entrenched inequality.

2026 is not a neutral year. Youth decide whether they are pulled towards justice or default to austerity.

CLOSING: APPEAL TO ACTIVISTS

The room where it happens needs new voices

- Climate diplomacy has been too comfortable with technical language that hides human cost.
- The IEJ / COSATU framework shows that workers, youth and communities can set the terms.
- Your job towards COP31 is not to beg for inclusion. It is to demand the architecture of inclusion.
- The science is clear. The finance gap is measurable. The framework exists. What is needed is political will, and you are here to generate it.

FROM PROTEST TO POLICY

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Thank you. Questions welcome.

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