



Insight Brief:

Just Transition in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

DECEMBER 2025

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Acronyms

NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions	MRV	Measurement, reporting, and verification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme	SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
FOLU	Forestry and other land use	TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
ILO	International Labour Organization	WRI	World Resources Institute



Photo by westend61 / Envato

SECTION 1

Introduction

To ensure no one is left behind in the transition to low carbon, climate resilient economies, policies and actions must be shared, implemented, and financed in a just and equitable manner. Efforts must include everything from developing green skills among the workforce to promoting green jobs and decent work to developing and strengthening social protection systems to pursue inclusive stakeholder participation and social dialogue. While mainstreaming these efforts into NDCs can help streamline and scale just transitions, only 39% of the 2020 and 2021 NDCs explicitly referenced the “just transition”.¹

¹ See the International Labour Organization's report, [Mapping Just Transition in NDCs: An Overview](#).

The NDC Partnership Support Unit characterizes the just transition as activities that maximize economic and social opportunities or minimize and address the potential adverse impacts of climate action on society, with consideration for those in situations of vulnerability and disadvantage. Such activities may also contribute to reducing inequality and equitably distributing the benefits of climate action. They include:

- promotion of **green jobs and decent work** (e.g., promoting high-quality and green jobs, occupational health and safety, and labor standards and workers' rights);
- **skills development** (e.g., curriculum of training programs tailored to green skills, including in the context of technical and vocational education and training [TVET]);
- **social protection measures and policies** (e.g., unemployment benefits, employment schemes, pensions, insurance schemes, cash transfers, social services, support to low-income households and displaced populations);
- **participatory processes and social dialogue** (e.g., activities that engage affected communities or vulnerable groups in just transition-related processes and engagement with trade unions, employers' organizations, and industry groups); and
- **general just transition requests** (e.g., development or implementation of just transition plans, strategies, or frameworks and employment and social impact assessments of climate change and climate policies).

About Insight Briefs

Insight briefs are analyses developed by the NDC Partnership Support Unit, members, or partner institutions to share insights into thematic issues based on requests received by countries and the support provided by the NDC Partnership. This insight brief analyzes requests for support the NDC Partnership has received from developing country members related to just transition. It identifies trends related to country requests and support offerings to inform how the NDC Partnership can refine and scale up needed support for the just transition-focused efforts of its member countries.



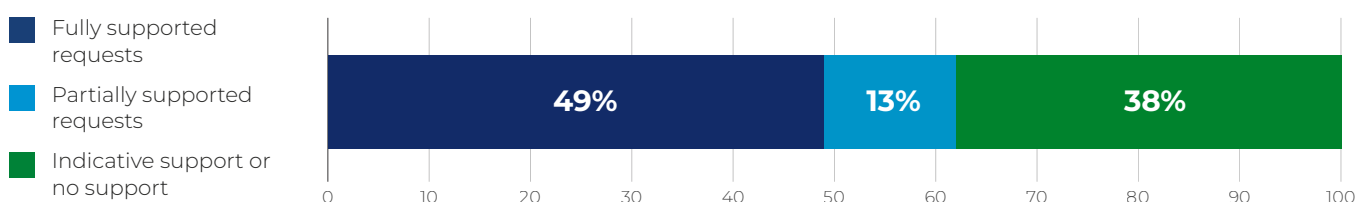
Photo by NewJadsada / Envato

SECTION 2

Just Transition Requests: Facts and Figures

A total of **83 countries** have submitted **314 requests** for support through the NDC Partnership on the topic of just transition. This represents 79% of all countries requesting support through the NDC Partnership.

Just transition-related requests have a higher support rate compared to all requests submitted to the NDC Partnership; 49% are fully supported and 13% are partially supported.

FIGURE 1

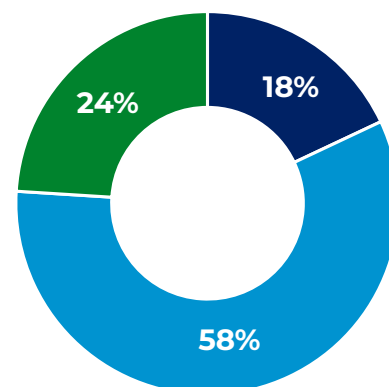
Breakdown of requests

Focus Area

While mitigation-focused requests comprise 30% of all requests for support, these are less common among just transition-focused requests. This trend reflects a more significant focus on crosscutting needs among countries' just transition requests compared to overall requests, likely due to the prevalence of whole-of-society approaches in just transition-related requests.

FIGURE 2

■ Mitigation
■ Crosscutting
■ Adaptation

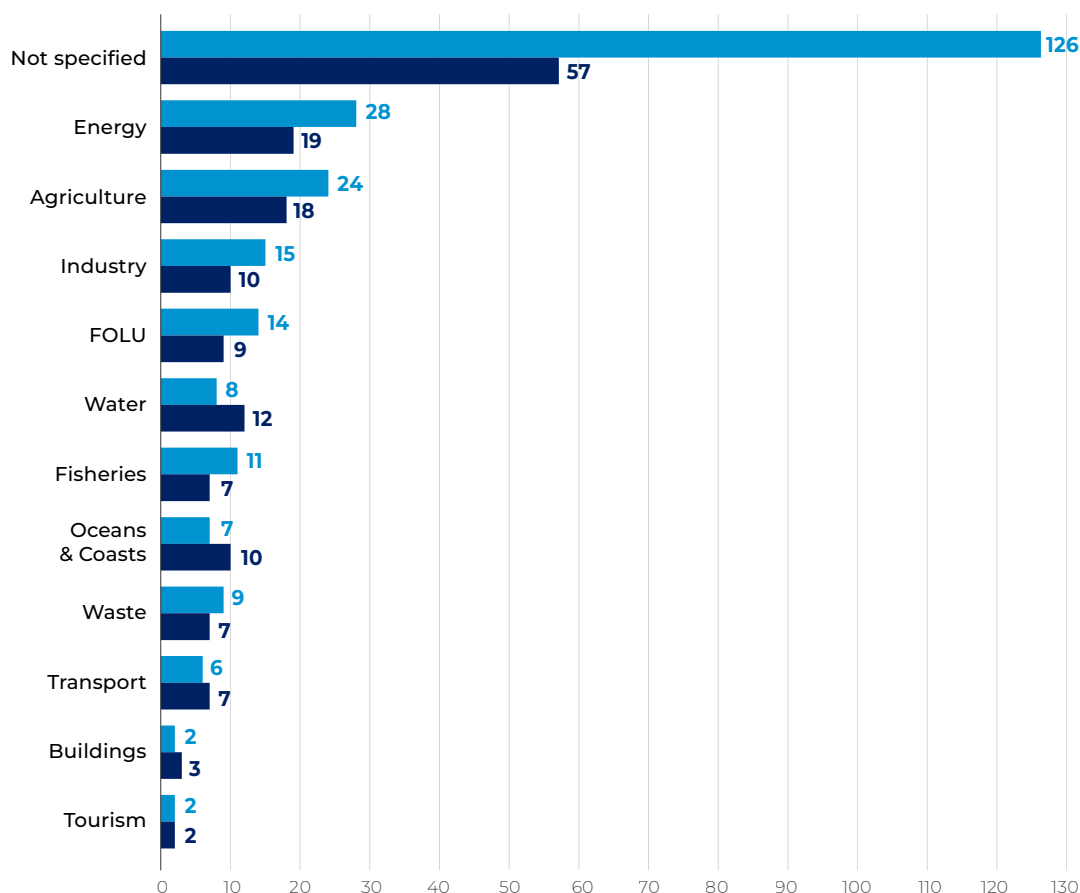


Sectors

Fifty-eight percent of just transition-related requests do not have a specific sectoral focus. Of those that specify sectoral needs, energy, agriculture, and industry are the most common sectors—representing 15%, 13%, and 8% of just transition requests, respectively. The industry and fisheries sectors are more prevalent among countries' just transition requests compared to all requests, while the greatest support gaps exist in just transition requests within the water and oceans and coasts sectors.

FIGURE 3

■ Supported
■ Unsupported

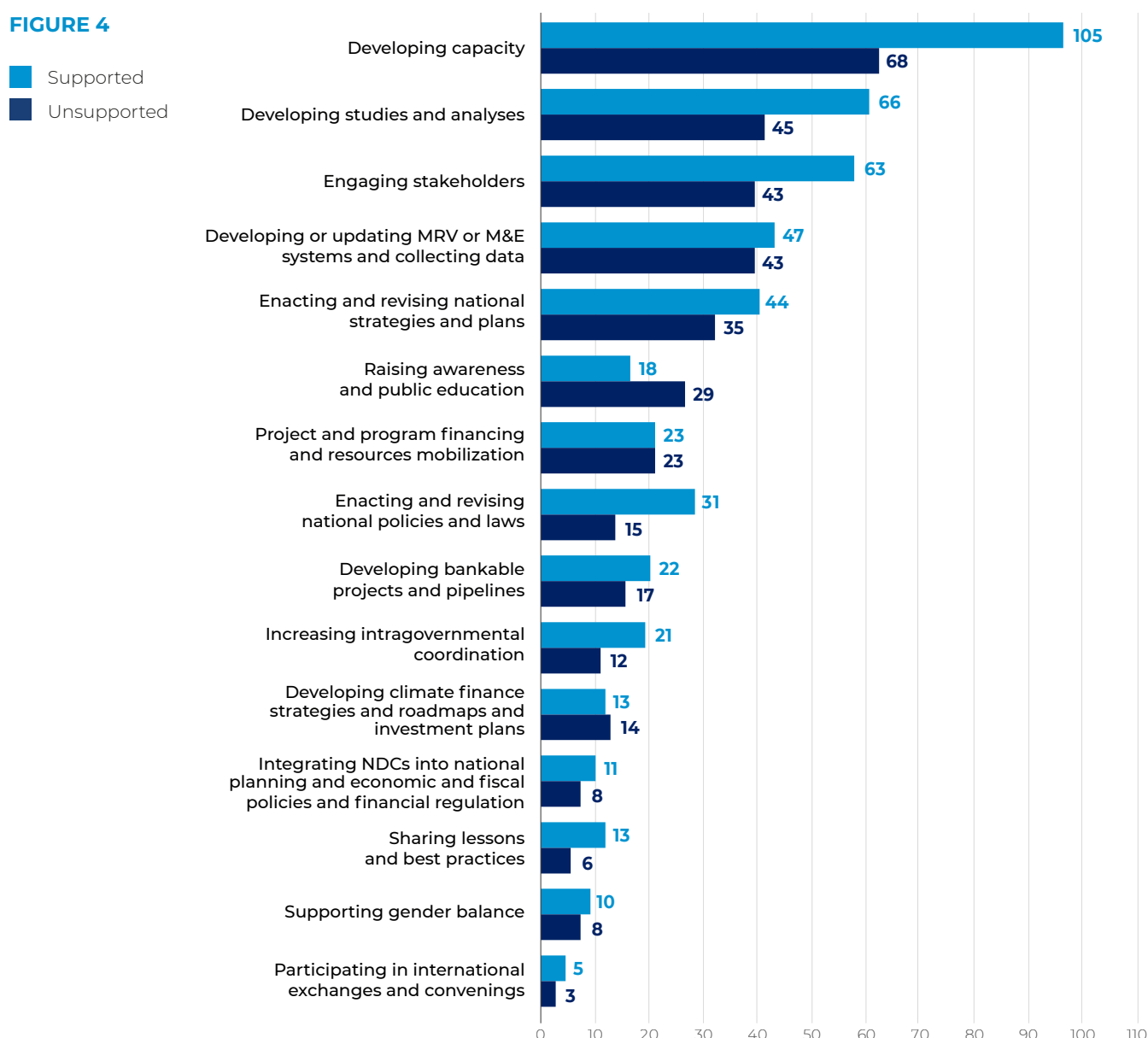


Activity Type

Many just transition-related requests focus on capacity development or developing studies and analyses. These requests can include, for instance, reskilling workers through technical trainings or sectoral vulnerability assessments, which inform investment priorities. For example, the Dominican Republic requested support in 2023 to train dam operators to manage the water supply with new resilient infrastructure and hydraulic equipment installed through a dam rehabilitation program that ensured a gender balance among participants. This request is partially supported by the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

Stakeholder engagement and awareness raising and public education requests are more prevalent in just transition requests compared to all requests, and the greatest support gaps exist in just transition requests related to collecting data or developing or updating measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems (48% unsupported) and developing capacity (39% unsupported).

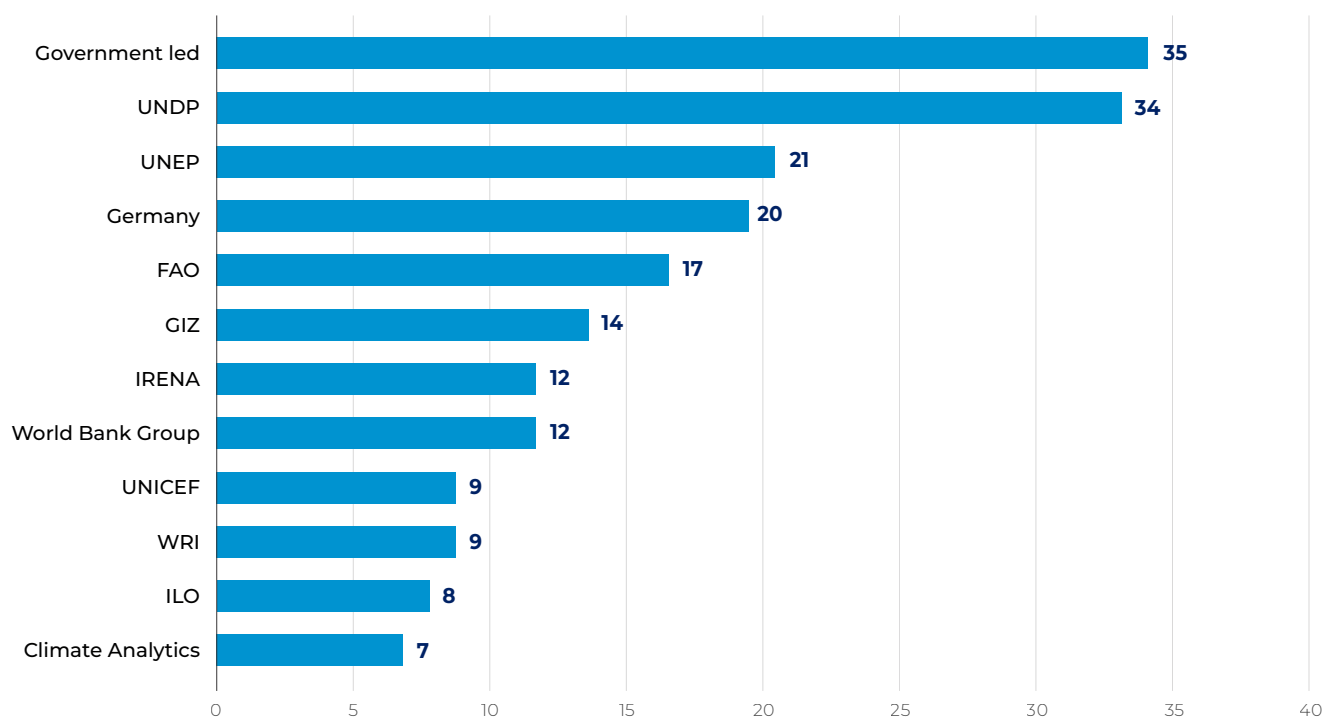
FIGURE 4



Confirmed Partner Support

Fifty out of 297 partners providing support through the NDC Partnership (17%) have provided support to at least one just transition request. The top 12 partners (by number of just transition requests supported) are shown here. Developing country governments are also leading a significant share of support themselves in the just transition space—supporting 11% of all just transition requests.

FIGURE 5



Just Transition Subtopics

The table below summarizes trends across four types of just transition requests.

Green skills development	Sixty-five countries submitted 175 requests related to green skills development—56% of all just transition requests. Fifty-nine percent of these requests are supported. For example, Nigeria requested support through their NDC implementation plan launched in 2024 to develop training courses on renewable technologies and industry investment plans in line with their plan to develop a skilled workforce in the national renewable energy industry. This request is supported by the Government of Nigeria, UNDP, and the World Bank.
Participatory processes and social dialogue	Fifty-one countries submitted 83 requests related to participatory processes and social dialogue—26% of all just transition requests. Forty-nine percent of these requests are supported. For example, the Bahamas requested support in 2025 to establish a comprehensive roadmap for facilitating a just and inclusive climate transition by engaging diverse stakeholders—including labor unions and industry representatives—in collaborative decision-making and by designing pathways for workforce retraining and economic support through consultations. This request remains unsupported.
Social protection	Thirteen countries submitted 36 requests related to social protection—11% of all just transition requests. Fifty percent of these requests are supported. For example, Malawi requested support through their NDC implementation plan launched in 2024 to update the National Support Policy, including the establishment and operationalization of a social support fund to provide social support to households affected by climate change-related shocks and stressors (such as natural disasters). This request remains unsupported.
Green jobs and decent work	Twenty countries submitted 48 requests related to green jobs and decent work—9% of all just transition requests. Forty-four percent of these requests are supported. For example, Belize requested support through their NDC implementation plan launched in 2022 to build capacity among professionals in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors to develop plans for alternative livelihoods in order to encourage more sustainable fishing and marine harvesting or extraction. This request is partially supported by FAO.



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SECTION 3

Addressing Challenges to Integrating Just Transition Elements into NDCs

A summary of key challenges to integrating just transition considerations into NDCs and solutions to address them are presented below.²

Whole of Government

Challenges: Limited institutional capacity, lack of interministerial and cross-sectoral collaboration, lack of coordination between national and subnational governments, and frequent changes in government can limit whole-of-government engagement and ownership in driving a just transition.

² These challenges and solutions were identified through the NDC Partnership's July 2025 thematic partner discussion, which brought together experts from across 17 organizations on the topic of a just transition.

Way forward: The NDC Partnership can help generate whole-of-government engagement by emphasizing cross-sectoral linkages in just transition efforts through targeted engagement across ministries, highlighting financial implications of the transition to a low carbon society and specific, data-driven opportunities for cross-ministerial ownership to benefit all sectors. Vertical integration is also key in driving whole-of-government ownership and can be supported through tailored capacity building initiatives aimed at aligning goals and addressing bottlenecks between national and subnational governments.

Whole-of-Society and Private Sector Engagement

Challenges: Cultural and social barriers, a large workforce with significant reskilling needs, and education systems ill-equipped to impart appropriate skills for the transition to a lower carbon economy create difficulties for developing country governments to successfully engage the whole of society in a just transition. Developing country governments can face challenges engaging the private sector in cross-sectoral or long-term green skilling efforts.

Way forward: The NDC Partnership can help encourage whole-of-society, including private sector, engagement in just transition efforts by supporting participatory processes and social dialogue as policies and programs are developed and implemented, ensuring groups impacted by structural inequalities and by just transition efforts are meaningfully consulted. This can include small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employers, labor groups, and other civil society stakeholders. It is important that these efforts are not restricted to the environmental space and that stakeholders across the workforce are engaged, regardless of industry. Coordination mechanisms—subnational, national, sectoral, or industry-level—can be successful avenues for meaningfully engaging these stakeholder groups and can help encourage long-term buy-in from private sector actors and labor representatives.

Economic Transition and Data Availability

Challenges: Some developing countries have large, informal economies that are not reflected in national employment or educational statistics, making it difficult for governments to develop a clear picture of the support needed to access decent work through the transition to a low carbon economy. This lack of data availability can extend across the formal economy in contexts in which data collection resources are limited. Furthermore, workers' movements through the changing workforce and economy may follow any number of different paths, requiring complex models and plans to account for the diverse set of reskilling and employment needs during the transition.

Way forward: The NDC Partnership can help enable a smooth economic transition that accounts for complexity and allows for diversification by supporting developing countries in developing studies and analyses accounting for this complexity. Coordination mechanisms can help ensure these studies and analyses include the affected communities and the informal economy. These assessments should consider workers in both the formal and informal economy to provide a clear picture of the reskilling and employment programs needed and to enable the workforce's access to decent work. Private sector actors can also support

these efforts by building reskilling programs into their strategies and implementing them throughout their supply chains. Where countries' just transition efforts are hindered by limited data collection resources, in addition to targeted studies and analysis, partners can support building data collection into NDCs to institutionalize data availability.

Adapting Efforts to Local Contexts

Challenges: Development and implementation of just transition strategies will look different in each context; approaches need to be varied and tailored to local contexts. For example, in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), where emissions are relatively low but energy consumption is high, the workforce transition will vary significantly compared to larger emitting countries. This can be a challenge, as locally adapted approaches can require significant technical expertise to develop and implement novel approaches.

Way forward: The NDC Partnership can help countries adapt general just transition strategies and plans to local contexts through dedicated capacity and tailored support. This can take the form of embedded advisors—for example, Antigua and Barbuda received support through the NDC Partnership for a just transition specialist embedded in the Department of Environment. This can also take the form of country platforms or taskforces, which can be mandated to ensure just transition strategies and plans are tailored to the local context. This dedicated capacity can create long-term feedback loops, setting the stage for successful strategies.



Insight Brief:
Just Transition in NDCs

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