Short-Term Consultancy: Request for Proposals

Research Consultant – Private Sector Standards and Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP)
July 2023

The Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) is seeking a research consultant to support its research, strategy, and outreach related to Just Energy Transitions Partnerships (JETPs). The objective of this research is to better understand the human rights risks and social opportunities associated with private sector involvement in JETP’s (ie the “J” in JETP). The project will use South Africa’s JETP as the pilot country of focus, but the final output is intended to be informative for a wide range of practitioners engaging on energy transitions in other JETP countries.

The ideal candidate will have a background in corporate sustainability and solid understanding of the international performance standards governing the energy sector globally, and ideally of the South African context specifically. You will have a strong network of contacts in South Africa with expertise on the energy sector and energy transition (ideally across business, government, finance, and civil society). You will be highly self-directed, enjoy the challenge of mapping complex systems and standards, and able to effectively navigate ambiguity to co-create new approaches for studying novel questions. You will also have a demonstrable ability to write compellingly and distill multifaceted issues into digestible and actionable information for your intended audience.

- **Role location**: Home-based and therefore flexible, but preferably within 2 hours of GMT.
- **Deadline for applications**: 9am UK-time, Tuesday 8th Aug 2023
- **Ideal start date**: Early September 2023
- **Duration of consultancy**: The duration of the position is expected to encompass 40 days of work over a six-month period (some flexibility possible).
- **Reporting to**: The research consultant will primarily work under the guidance of IHRB’s Head of Just Transitions programme, but also occasionally brief IHRB’s CEO on project progress, as well as coordinate with IHRB’s Senior Advisor on editorial review and IHRB’s Head of Communications on project initiation and final production.
THE CONTEXT

Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) are fast becoming the go-to model for national-level decarbonisation initiatives. South Africa has led the way, negotiating an $8.5 billion deal in 2021 with an International Partner Group (IPG) of donor governments (France, Germany, the UK, USA, and European Union) to catalyse the first five years of its highly complex industrial transformation to net-zero by 2050. Several other countries have also begun emulating South Africa’s approach to negotiate their own decarbonisation deals, in particular Indonesia, Vietnam, and now Senegal (expanding the roster of IPG donor countries to include Japan, Canada, Italy, and Norway).

JETPs are a promising first step in catalysing the much larger-scale private investment, infrastructure, and services required for each country’s energy transition, continuously, over the next three decades. But they are also a new and untested model with enormous implications for national populations.

We are already seeing a lack of internal and external coherence in the way various national policy makers across the JETP countries are defining and understanding the “just” dimensions of just transitions, as well as the challenges in practice of ensuring transparency and meaningful stakeholder engagement during the early-stage negotiations of a JETP investment plan.¹

A key gap within the early-stage analytical landscape relates to the social and human rights responsibilities of the private sector actors who will be central to the implementation of national JETP investment plans in the medium- to long-term. This project seeks to fill that gap. The human rights risks and social opportunities posed by the private sector under the banner of JETPs must be better understood and integrated from the outset of JETP formation and investment planning. Otherwise, the current lack of alignment risks the inspiring vision of decarbonisation-as-development falling short – provoking potential societal and community backlash, and undermining net-zero imperatives.

THE NEED

Analysis of South Africa’s lessons learned so far, the most advanced of the JETP countries to date, have focused largely on the public finance dimensions of JETP formulation and technical initiation.² However, it will be the private sector that ultimately delivers each JETP in the medium and long-term, both in terms of financing and industrial systems change. As such, further mapping and analysis is needed of both the

¹ Haley St. Dennis “One Year On – 5 Takeaways from South Africa’s Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP)” (2022)
² See for example: Intellidex and African Climate Foundation “Financing South Africa’s Just Energy Transition” (2022) and “Funding Social Justice in the Energy Transition” (2023); Institute for Economic Justice “A Framework for Understanding the Just Energy Transition Partnership on South Africa’s Just Transition” (2022); Sguazzin and Burkhardt “How 60 Million South Africans Are Being Failed by Global Climate Politics,” Bloomberg (24 Apr 2023); Thabo Molelekwa “Uncertainty on renewable retraining frightens South Africa’s coal communities” Climate Home News (3 Apr 2023).
private sector social standards across the JETP value chain (supply, demand, finance) as well as the key private sector actors, relationships, and feedback loops that drive the energy system.

For example:

- **Finance**: Early indications suggest that financing the “justice components” of JETPs can be less attractive to private sector investors and heavily reliant in practice on philanthropic funding, development aid, and public sector financing. The domestic and international private investors that are supposed to crowd-in behind the initial JETP packages are coloured by differing commitments to social components within their ESG frameworks, and key international frameworks such as the IFC Performance Standards have not been updated to reflect the *Paris Agreement*, NDC developments, or the growth of private sector commitments to respecting human and labour rights and contributing responsibly to just transitions.

- **Supply**: Emphasis on the energy transition to date, both globally and in South Africa, has primarily focused on the exit out of high-carbon sectors and corresponding impacts on workers in these regions, and to a lesser extent other affected groups. Far less attention has been placed on the social responsibilities of the renewables industry, upstream or downstream (and despite drawing from the same financial ecosystem as the traditional extractives operators). The lens of energy governance in the South African context is also a key salient risk that will either disable or enable strong social performance depending on how it is dealt with.

- **Demand**: Better linking justice and equity goals across the supply and demand spectrum could dramatically increase commercial incentives in the long term. Globally the energy demand-side has few if any social standards governing the social responsibilities of the private sector (ie labour rights, indigenous rights, etc). There are limited examples of individual commodity initiatives involving end-users (such as some of the German car manufacturers in relation to batteries, or Orsted in relation to the fabrication of wind turbines), while some green-only public sector and city-networks as well as corporate power purchasing initiatives are forming to drive greater uptake of social criteria (eg forced labour provisions).

This type of value chain analysis can illustrate linkages, as well as gaps, in the standards directing the performance of the private sector actors involved in the energy transition. Strengthening, and better joining up, these standards at the early stage of national transition planning could incentivise the prioritisation of human rights-aligned approaches that enable ambitious mitigation, adaptation, and climate resilient development.
PROJECT AIM & OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of this project is to contribute clarity over how the social elements of private sector involvement in JETPs are understood, designed, and engaged upon to ensure the social sustainability of JETPs supports efficient and effective climate action.

The objectives for this research and final deliverable include:

- A more coherent ecosystem of private sector engagement that is incentivised to produce just and equitable outcomes from JETP investments, in concert with public and philanthropic efforts to date.
- Greater comparability and consistency in assessing national-level decarbonisation efforts on what the “J” in “JETP” means in practice, and a foundation for driving greater monitoring, engagement, and accountability across JETPs globally.
- National and local civil society, worker, and indigenous communities are more aware of how the private sector ecosystem operates and better able to hold these actors as well as their own governments to account.

CONSULTANCY DELIVERABLES

In summary, the research consultant will:

1. **Standards Mapping:** Map and analyse key private sector standards (national and international) governing the energy transition in terms of their social and human rights content/criteria.

2. **Systems Mapping:** Map and analyse the key private sector actors and relationships involved in South Africa’s JETP delivery.

3. **Final Narrative Report:** Package this analysis into an accessible report with recommendations for how to meaningfully strengthen the “J” in JETP as it relates to private sector roles and responsibilities.

The scope of each component is elaborated further below.
1. Standards Mapping
   - Desktop research of the key standards governing the private sector as it relates to the energy transition, and an analysis of their alignment with social/human rights criteria. This review and analysis of private sector standards will cover the key supply and demand related standards governing the private sector.\(^5\)
   - This component will include a relatively equal split in focus between South African standards (as the primary national case study) and key global/international standards.
   - The final output of this component should include a snapshot/distillation of the research into a short (5-7 pages), easily digestible, and ideally visual summary.

2. Systems Mapping
   - Desktop research of the key private sector actors, relationships, and feedback loops at play across the energy ecosystem (supply- and demand-sides).\(^4\)
   - Undertake 8-10 semi-structured interviews with key experts on South Africa’s energy system, transition state of play, and barriers/opportunities therein to embed human rights and social criteria into private sector standards, plans, and processes.\(^5\)
   - This will ideally include a relatively equal split in focus between South Africa as the primary national case study, and any notable distinctions from the global energy value chain.
   - The final output of this component should include a snapshot/distillation of the research into a short (5-7 pages), easily digestible, and ideally visual summary.

3. Final Narrative Report
   - A short (2 page) Executive Summary with a compelling description of why these issues matter, the current state of play, and visual overviews of the systems and standards mapping.
   - A short (5-7 pages) narrative of the private sector standards mapped and their alignment (or lack thereof) with key social and human rights criteria.
   - A short (5-7 pages) narrative of the systems mapping.

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\(^1\) An initial list of standards for review will be provided to the consultant, but we expect that list to be incomplete analysis of the key finance-related standards will be undertaken by another research consultant and integrated into this output.

\(^2\) An initial list of suggested experts from government, business, finance, trade unions, and civil society will be provided to the consultant, but the ideal candidate will have a robust existing network of contacts and relationships and able to proactively suggest additional experts to engage with for this phase of the project.

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○ Recommendations (3-5 pages) for companies, financial institutions, and domestic/international policy makers on how to support the “J” in JETP through the strengthening of corporate standards and systems thinking.

The consultant will also play a role in informing the communications strategy for wider engagement and dissemination based on the stakeholder mapping involved at each stage of the project, playing a horizon-scanning role throughout the consultancy to identify media outlets and influential platforms to engage on JETP advocacy (this input will remain internal).

**AUDIENCE**

The primary aim of this project is to contribute clarity over how the social elements of private sector involvement in JETPs are understood, designed, and engaged upon to ensure the social sustainability of JETPs supports efficient and effective climate action. While the primary country in focus is South Africa, the intention is to structure the final output and findings in a way that is also informative and useful to other JETP countries.

Therefore, the final narrative report should have broad, actionable appeal to key stakeholders, including:

- Governments and intergovernmental organisations shaping energy transition planning.
- Companies – particularly domestic and international companies investing in South Africa’s energy sector.
- Investors, banks, and other domestic and international financial actors.
- Local and international civil society organisations concerned with the social implications of climate action in South Africa and other JETP countries.
**REQUIREMENTS, EXPERIENCE, AND QUALIFICATIONS**

**Essential**
- Ability to commit up to 40 working days over a 6-month period, starting from September 2023.
- Excellent understanding of the energy transition landscape in South Africa, including both the transition out of coal and the transition into a more diversified renewables mix.
- Knowledge of the social standards governing energy companies (both fossil fuel and renewables) globally.
- Experience of effective ESG analysis of the energy sector/companies.
- Ability to produce accessible and compelling written analysis on complex topics for stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and constituencies – from financial actors to business, government, civil society, and trade union representatives.
- Experience undertaking work that requires awareness of political sensitivities and maintaining trust through careful diplomacy and multi-stakeholder engagement.
- Fluency in English with excellent research and writing skills; an articulate, confident, and credible communicator.

**Desirable**
- Location based in South Africa, or with demonstrable experience of working in South Africa and with an existing network of South African contacts from business, finance, government, and civil society working on climate action or climate justice issues.
- Ability to undertake at least one research visit to a primary coal area in South Africa with local partners.
- Knowledge of the performance standards governing energy companies (both fossil fuel and renewables) in South Africa.
- Knowledge of the international human rights framework, UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and/or rights-based approaches to development.
- Knowledge of the social implications of climate action, including key challenges and opportunities for a just and equitable energy transition.
- Experience/examples of working with designers to turn complex subjects into engaging visual communications.
**FEE**

A fee of between £20,000-£25,000 (UK Sterling) will be paid for this project (including VAT if applicable). Project-related travel will be covered by IHRB in addition to the specified fee.

Payment schedule:
- 20% on signing the agreement
- 20% upon submission of first draft of the standards mapping
- 20% upon completion of the systems mapping
- 40% on completion of all objectives

**HOW TO APPLY**

Interested parties (individual or organisations) are invited to submit the following:

- A proposal (not to exceed four pages in total) including: CV; cover letter outlining your motivation for this role and how your skills enable you to achieve the objectives; and a summary of your approach to this project. This can include links to any relevant previous experience, or projects with a similar approach.
- A writing sample
- Your fixed fee/day rate (including VAT if applicable), including a breakdown of costs, bearing in mind a 40 day allocation across 6 months.

Please email your application to Kathy McLeish at recruitment@ihrb.org with “Research Consultant - JETP Private Sector Standards Research Consultant” in the subject line. Please also state where you saw the vacancy advertised.

1. **Deadline for applications:** Tuesday 8th Aug 2023 by 09:00 UK-time.

2. **Interviews:** Wednesday 16th August 2023 between the hours of 14:00-18:00 South Africa-time (45 min in duration). Please indicate in your proposal any dates/times that you will not be available within that window. (Successful candidates will be notified by Friday 11th August 2023.) A possible second interview will take place on Friday 18th August 2023.

3. **Expected start date:** Early September 2023 (ideally). A consultancy offer will be subject to the receipt of at least two satisfactory references.

*Applications from unsuccessful candidates will be held on file for 6 months after the end of the recruitment process.*
ABOUT IHRB

Founded in 2009 under the leadership of Mary Robinson, IHRB deploys a mix of social and human rights-based research, engagement, and collaborative action with businesses, governments, financial actors, and civil society representatives to make human rights part of everyday business. We have developed a track record of independent analysis as well as constructive interventions and collaborative engagement with all constituencies, earning a reputation as a trusted organisation committed to working with all actors to identify practical solutions and approaches needed to effect positive change. (For further details on IHRB’s vision, mission, approaches, and plans please see IHRB's 2023-2025 Strategy.)

IHRB is an established thought leader on the social implications of the global energy transition, with a foundation of authoritative guidance and convenings on the principled and pragmatic approaches required. IHRB’s foundational report “Just Transitions For All” examines the just transition agenda from the perspective of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the broader responsible business movement. IHRB’s white paper on the role of banks outlines the critical role that private capital will play in delivering net-zero by 2050 and banks’ human rights responsibilities in doing so. The 2023 IHRB-Wilton Park Dialogue report sets out the different components essential for any private sector involvement in just transition processes, representing a starting point for how greater monitoring, engagement, and accountability can be exerted across JETPs globally.

We coordinate closely on just transition activities with key allies across all major constituencies (business, financial, government, civil society). IHRB holds observer status to the UNFCCC COP as well as UN ECOSOC status. IHRB representatives also sit on a number of advisory groups, for example the UK Transition Plan Taskforce working group on just transitions, the forthcoming ILO-UNEP FI guidance project for banks and insurance companies, UN Global Compact’s Just Transitions Think Lab, and WBA's advisory group for its Just Transition Benchmark.

IHRB also has a strong track record in successfully developing permanent, independent initiatives and national platforms on key systemic issues. These include: The Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB), Centro Regional De Empresas Y Emprendimientos Responsables (CREER), Corporate Human Rights Benchmark (CHRB), Centre for Sport and Human Rights (CSHR), and Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment (LGRR).