

# A JUST TRANSITION FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

DOI: [10.58867/CITV8097](https://doi.org/10.58867/CITV8097)

*The transition to a low carbon and resilient economy will create challenges and opportunities for industries and communities. Managing these so that people do not get left behind and opportunities are widely available is important for ensuring a Just Transition for all.*

Janna Tenzing<sup>\*</sup>, Murat Onur<sup>\*\*</sup>  
Ferdous Jahan<sup>\*\*\*</sup> & Varalakshmi Vemuru<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

Keywords: Climate Change, Economic Impact,  
Green Transition, Türkiye, Vulnerability.



TPQ

Fall 2023

\* Janna Tenzing is a Social Development Specialist at the World Bank.

\*\* Murat Onur is a Senior Social Development Specialist at the World Bank.

\*\*\* Ferdous Jahan is a Senior Social Development Specialist at the World Bank.

\*\*\*\* Varalakshmi Vemuru is a Practice Manager at the World Bank.

**W**ith warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and erratic rainfall patterns, being more frequently confronted with extreme climate events is the new, common reality across Türkiye.<sup>1</sup> Heavy flooding, storms, protracted droughts, and intense heatwaves have aggravated food insecurity, water stress and land degradation, and led to unprecedented disaster events. In 2021, the country experienced its worst-ever wildfire season. 139,500 hectares of forest burned across 54 provinces, destroying vital carbon sinks, displacing numerous local communities, and injuring and killing many.<sup>2</sup> The following year, it witnessed a record-breaking 1,030 extreme events, in the form of intense rainstorms and flooding.<sup>3</sup> This rising trend of hazardous events is worsening with continued global average temperature increase. A historically water-rich country, Türkiye is expected to be water-scarce by 2030, due to decreasing precipitation (including snowfall in the mountains), retreating glaciers, and the shrinking or salinization of major lakes and wetlands, posing a serious threat to the country's freshwater supply and agriculture sector.<sup>4</sup> Projected sea level rise furthermore puts at risk coastal cities, including Istanbul, threatening major economic centers, critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges and power lines, as well as densely populated residential areas.

Although Türkiye's greenhouse gas emissions have been rising sharply over the past decade, this increase has been slower than economic growth, and its per capita emissions are lower than for members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union.<sup>5</sup> Yet compared to these countries, the combination of such physical climatic risks, regional and population exposure and sensitivity to hazards, and socioeconomic factors make Türkiye much more vulnerable to climate change.<sup>6</sup> The recent steps the Government has taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change, such as ratifying the Paris Agreement, committing a net-zero emissions target by 2053, and adopting a Green Deal Action Plan, among others, are promising. But to be successful in implementing adaptation and mitigation policies and actions, people and communities must be at the heart of the country's 'green transition' towards a climate-resilient and low-carbon economy.

1) World Bank, *Türkiye Adaptation and Resilience Assessment: A Whole of Economy Approach to Climate and Disaster Risks* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2023). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099042723135539629/pdf/P17456909414590250907f0334d02fd1be1.pdf>

2) OGM (2021) Forestry Statistics 2021. Ankara. General Directorate of Forestry; <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099042723135539629/pdf/P17456909414590250907f0334d02fd1be1.pdf>; World Bank, Türkiye Country Climate and Development Report. CCDR Series (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2022). <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/01826a0c-059f-5a0c-91b7-2a6b8ec5de2f>

3) Turkish State Meteorological Service, The State of Türkiye's Climate in 2022. Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change (2023). [http://www.emcc.mgm.gov.tr/files/State\\_of\\_the\\_Climate\\_in\\_Turkey\\_in\\_2022.pdf](http://www.emcc.mgm.gov.tr/files/State_of_the_Climate_in_Turkey_in_2022.pdf)

4) Barak, T., Yanarocak and H. E. C., "Confronting Climate Change, Turkey needs "Green" Leadership now more than ever," Middle East Institute (2022). <https://www.mei.edu/publications/confronting-climate-change-turkey-needs-green-leadership-now-more-ever>; World Bank (2022).

5) World Bank (2022).

6) World Bank (2022).

## *Vulnerability to Climate Change is Unevenly Distributed*

Annual losses from floods combined with non-climatic events such as earthquakes are already estimated at 1.5 billion dollars.<sup>7</sup> While this figure is stark, it does not reflect how unevenly distributed the impacts of such biophysical hazards are across the country and its population. Indeed, vulnerability to climate risks is a function of how exposed and sensitive regions and people are to hazards, and the resources and capacity they have to cope with and recover from shocks to their livelihoods. As in other countries, it is the poorest areas and communities of Türkiye that will continue to bear the brunt of the adverse effects of climate change. Those most vulnerable include communities in rural parts of the country, primarily located in the eastern and southeastern provinces, which are already falling behind the rest of the country in terms of social welfare and economic prosperity.<sup>8</sup> Their predominantly agricultural livelihoods are highly dependent on natural resources and a healthy ecosystem. Data from the 2019 Survey on Income and Living Conditions show that on average, 10 percent of the income of the country's households below the international poverty line of \$5.5 a day is from agriculture, with the rest often coming from precarious, informal or seasonal jobs that lead to long spells of unemployment.<sup>9</sup> Such households consequently have fewer resources to draw on during times of need, as well as fewer options to diversify their sources of income towards sectors that are less sensitive to climate shocks and thus lack requisite resilience.<sup>10</sup> The data also show that over half of poor households live in dwellings with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundations, or rotting window frames or floor.<sup>11</sup> Making matters worse, they tend to live in more marginal and hazardous areas, such as those exposed to high levels of seismic or climatic risks; 13.7 percent of people living in poverty are exposed to flooding, Türkiye's second most frequent cause of disasters, after earthquakes.<sup>12</sup>

Climate change does not only widen regional disparities, but also exacerbates pre-existing and intersecting social inequalities, such as those based on gender and age. Currently, Türkiye ranks 129th out of 146 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (based on measures for economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment).<sup>13</sup> Female workforce participation is only at 33 percent, the lowest in

7) World Bank (2023), Just Transition in Türkiye: Challenges & Opportunities - Country Team Discussion.

8) UNDP, <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/europe-and-central-asia/t%C3%BCrkiye>

9) World Bank (2023), *Türkiye Adaptation and Resilience Assessment: A Whole of Economy Approach to Climate and Disaster Risks* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2023).

10) World Bank (2023).

11) World Bank (2023).

12) World Bank (2023); Rentschler, J., Salhab, M. and Jafino, B.A, "Flood Exposure and Poverty in 188 Countries," *Nat Commun*, Vol. 13 (2022): 3527. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-30727-4>

13) World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2023: Insight Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2023). [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf)

the OECD.<sup>14</sup> Traditional gender roles often mean that women, who are predominantly responsible for sourcing water and ensuring household food security and wellbeing, are experiencing heavier care burdens as a result of immediate and longer-term climatic changes.<sup>15</sup> They are often also disproportionately impacted by shocks due to long standing and unequal gender norms and values dictating ownership or control of resources, access to markets and essential services like education, health and social protection, and engagement in decision-making, among other critical factors that help build adaptive capacity and resilience.<sup>16</sup> This means that when disasters strike, women and girls are less likely to survive and more likely to be injured than their male counterparts.<sup>17</sup> In the aftermath, they are less able to access relief and assistance, further threatening their livelihoods, wellbeing and recovery, and contributing to a vicious cycle of vulnerability to future shocks. Effects of climate change on livelihoods, resource availability and competition, migration patterns, social cohesion, and human security, among others, are also shown to aggravate gender-based violence.<sup>18</sup>

Youth, who in general have fewer resources, coping mechanisms, social networks, and safety nets to draw on, are likewise more vulnerable than other groups to the impacts of climate change. Because the impacts of current high levels of global GHG emissions will be felt by generations to come, they moreover suffer from increasing uncertainty and anxiety regarding future quality of life, wellbeing, health, security, education, and employment prospects. Over half of Türkiye's population is under the age of 32, yet the country has a youth unemployment rate of nearly 26 percent, with approximately 30 percent of young people between 15 and 29 not currently in employment, education, or training.<sup>19</sup>

Türkiye's green transition is thus not only urgent for achieving its net-zero emissions target; it is also essential for ensuring that the country's good progress on poverty

14) World Bank Group, *Country Partnership Framework for the Republic of Turkey for the Period FY18-FY21* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2017). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/585411504231252220/pdf/Turkey-CPF-08072017.pdf>

15) IPCC (2022) *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)] (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA), doi:[10.1017/9781009325844](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844)

16) IPCC (2022); Fruttero et al. (2023) *Gendered Impacts of Climate Change: Evidence from Weather Shocks* (Washington, DC: World Bank). <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/39813>

17) Bradshaw, S. & Fordham, M. (2015) Double Disaster: Disaster through a Gender Lens. In *Hazards, Risks, and Disasters in Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-396451-9.00014-7>

18) Desai, B. H. & Mandal, M. (2021) "Role of Climate Change in Exacerbating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Women: A New Challenge for International Law," *Environmental Policy and Law*, Vol. 51. DOI: [10.3233/EPL-210055](https://doi.org/10.3233/EPL-210055); Erman et al. (2021) *Gender Dimensions of Disaster Risk and Resilience*. World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/35202>

19) European Training Foundation (2021) Focus on Turkey. [https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/focus-turkey#:~:text=Turkey%20has%20a%20relatively%20young,education%20or%20training%20\(NEETS\)](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/news/focus-turkey#:~:text=Turkey%20has%20a%20relatively%20young,education%20or%20training%20(NEETS))

reduction and socioeconomic development is not reversed because of climate change. The ongoing recovery from the devastating effects of February 2023 earthquakes, the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent climate extremes, presents an opportunity for building a more resilient, prosperous, and fairer future for the Turkish population.

### *A ‘Just’ Green Transition*

Lowering emissions towards net zero and building resilience to climate change demand transforming key systems in Türkiye’s economy, including those relating to energy, industry, transport, urban, agriculture, food, and water. Doing so will create large opportunities and long-lasting benefits for the country. According to the World Bank, such a pathway leads to a net \$15 billion gain over 2022-30 and a \$146 billion gain over 2022-40.<sup>20</sup> These are largely due to reduced fuel imports (Türkiye currently imports 99 percent of its gas and 93 percent of its oil), increased investment in renewable energy, and health benefits from reduced air pollution. Analysis by the United Nations and International Labour Organization finds that a swift and comprehensive implementation of low-carbon policies in Türkiye will lead to over 300,000 extra jobs by 2030, spread across the economy.<sup>21</sup> Emerging green sectors open opportunities for social entrepreneurship, and the decentralized nature of green infrastructure (e.g. renewable energy) is well-suited for the establishment of cooperatives. Investments in climate adaptation and the rehabilitation of local ecosystems likewise create earning opportunities for households and populations at the frontlines of climate change impacts and environmental degradation.

But like climate change itself, these transformations may cause uneven risks across households, workers, and regions, especially in the short- and medium-terms. Jobs will be created in some economic sectors but lost in others – notably in the traditional (fossil fuel) electricity industry.<sup>22</sup> Some regions and populations may be less able to benefit from the opportunities of the green transition than others. For instance, research from the World Bank finds a high concentration of ‘brown’ jobs in industries that have elevated rates of GHG emissions, and which tend to be held by prime-aged, male workers, not only in the economically leading, western regions of the country, but also in less prosperous (Hatay, Mardin, Malatya) and transition (Gaziantep, Zonguldak, Manisa, Aydin, Konya, and Kayseri) provinces in the east.<sup>23</sup> Yet, emerging ‘green’ jobs have so far been concentrated in the western regions only, and are moreover expected to require higher-skilled workers. Given that the

20) World Bank (2022) Türkiye Country Climate and Development Report. CCDR Series. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

21) International Labour Organization & United Nations Development Programme, “Social and Employment Impacts of Climate Change and Green Economy Policies in Türkiye,” (2022). [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms\\_849761.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms_849761.pdf)

22) International Labour Organization & United Nations Development Programme (2022); World Bank (2022).

23) Garrote-Sanchez, D. & Makovec, M. (2022) *Jobs, Skills, and the Green Transition: Challenges and Opportunities for Türkiye*.

largest proportion of unemployed women and youth are in the eastern provinces, these vulnerable groups will require targeted support to overcome the double barrier they face in accessing such new economic opportunities.

It is therefore imperative that Türkiye's green transition is also a 'just' transition. By 'just', we mean that the transition should help build inclusive societies, by expanding access to not only jobs, but also markets, services, and political, social, and cultural spaces for all those affected – especially vulnerable and marginalized groups who are currently excluded from such opportunities. It should strengthen trust, cohesion, and willingness to cooperate within and across communities, and between communities and the government. And it should strengthen the whole population's resilience to external shocks, climate-related and other, ensuring that people are safe, protected and can thrive over time, rather than fall into poverty trying to cope.<sup>24</sup>

The process of preparing for and implementing the transition, and achieving these just outcomes, also needs to be legitimate.<sup>25</sup> The extent to which communities accept who has authority over the green transition, what goals they pursue, and how policies and programs get implemented, depend on a transparent, accountable, and inclusive consultation and decision-making process, which welcomes meaningful participation from and dialogue with all segments of society. Well-intentioned efforts to embark on low-carbon pathways risk being met with resistance (and even lead to social unrest and violence) if consultation and involvement from the most affected groups and prioritization of their needs are deemed insufficient.

### ***How can Türkiye Ensure a Just Green Transition for People and Communities?***

First, the country should expand opportunities for all affected and vulnerable groups, especially already marginalized populations, with economic strategies for target sectors and regions. This includes diversifying local economies and expanding the economic base in carbon-intensive regions (such as in Bursa and Kocaeli, where jobs are concentrated in sectors such as steel, cement, chemicals and automotives that are in positions to gain from decarbonization.)<sup>26</sup> Doing so would create decent and sustainable work for people in the local area. Intervening in the labor market and building human capital is crucial, to ensure that workers have the skills needed to thrive during and after the transition; this means investing in reskilling, upskilling, and longer-term investment in education, particularly to take advantage of the demographic dividend brought about by Türkiye's large youth population.

24) Barron, P., Cord, L., Cuesta, J., Espinoza, S., Larson, G., Woolcock, M., *Social Sustainability in Development: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century* (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2023).

25) Barron, P. et al., (2023).

26) Garrote-Sanchez, D. & Makovec, M. (2022).

Support should also extend far beyond jobs. For example, the State should establish community benefit-sharing measures in areas where green investment is high, such as in the western provinces, and repurpose funding from industry closure to support the just transition. Additional revenues from the removal of fossil fuel subsidies or a carbon tax, moreover, can be used to compensate for or protect low-income regions and households from any adverse transition impacts;<sup>27</sup> adverse impacts might include reduced investment in basic social services (e.g. education and health), community upheaval and increased social tensions, among others.

Second, Türkiye should adopt policies to protect and mitigate the costs of the transition for people and communities. Social protection coverage, including in the forms of social safety nets, unemployment insurance, and health insurance, needs to be expanded so that all those who are adversely affected by the green transition are protected. Social protection measures can also be put in place to compensate for increased costs (e.g. of energy, heating, transport, housing) to consumers or businesses. In addition, care must be taken to ensure basic services and infrastructure are maintained in soon-to-be former, ‘brown’ mono-industry areas (such as in the coal regions of Zonguldak and Manisa). These communities’ access to schools, health services, water, and digital connectivity should not be interrupted, nor should plans for future investments in the region. For those who prefer to seek better opportunities elsewhere, policies to facilitate migration are critical— including to help build the resilience of migrants, host communities, and the communities they leave behind to climate and other shocks. Proactive efforts are also needed to mitigate wider social risks in communities affected by job losses, migration, or other transition impacts, such as gender-based violence, challenges related to mental health, and substance abuse.

Finally, Türkiye should establish the right processes to support change, empower citizens, and build trust in a shared vision for the post-transition future. Indeed, the global vision for a post-transition future is a positive one, with lower air pollution, fewer climate change impacts, higher paying jobs, better urban planning, transport and public infrastructure and services. The success of Türkiye’s green transition depends on processes to establish local and national dialogues on climate change and action, as well as social dialogues in target carbon-intensive sectors and regions to ensure that affected workers and communities are informed, have a voice, and play a meaningful role in decision-making. Existing community platforms may be used for mitigation and adaptation planning and supporting locally led climate action. Online platforms can further ensure widespread civic engagement and stakeholder consultation and input into green transition policies and programs.

---

27) World Bank (2022).

It is crucial that these efforts are led by Government, with the support of other key actors, including the regional and local stakeholders, private sector, civil society, and community leaders. Türkiye's transition will have uneven impacts on people and places and may aggravate challenges in accessing economic opportunities, particularly for the most vulnerable. Transitioning towards a greener and more inclusive future is therefore challenging, but there is no doubt that Türkiye has much to benefit from its ambitious climate agenda.