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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES SERIES

# BACKGROUND PAPER: JUST ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITION IN LEBANON

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Cover photo: Power ship near Zouk power plant, Lebanon (c) Maher Iskandar, Shutterstock

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# Introduction

This background paper is about the Just Environmental Transition (JET) in Lebanon based largely on input and perceptions from two consultations the Arab Reform Initiative's Environmental Political Program (EPP) organized with civil society actors it identified as working under the JET framework broadly. Thirty-two participants attended the first consultation on 12 July 2023. Only nine out of the 21 who confirmed their participation attended the second consultation on 10 October 2023 because the scheduled date coincided with the first days of Israel's bombardment of Gaza and the uncertainty around its repercussions on Lebanon. The context served as a poignant reminder of the geopolitical realities that surround any Just Environmental Transition in the region. The material on the global context and Lebanon's status in relation to the climate crisis is based on desk research.

The paper documents different perceptions of what a JET in Lebanon entails, what the JET priorities are, and what the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) could be in it. It aims to start thinking about how CSOs are thinking about JET in relation to the severe economic, political, and ecological crises that rocked Lebanon in recent years. The paper also aims to identify frictions or differences between conceptualizations and their practical applications.

## The Demand for JET: The Root Causes of the Climate Catastrophe

A good diagnosis shapes a good policy proposal. Before proposing and ideating on what a JET in Lebanon could look like, there must be a shared diagnosis of the root causes of the global climate catastrophe demanding a JET. Influential international environmental governance structures and programs diagnose the climate catastrophe as an imbalance and excess in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to the burning of fossil fuels starting in the 1800s, particularly carbon dioxide.<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, the reason for the climate crisis is simply an equation of more GHGs being emitted than

the Earth's systems can absorb while maintaining its relatively stable environment. With such a diagnosis, the solution becomes for the global economies to shift to non-fossil fuel, alternative energy sources that do not emit GHG. This logic invites proposals of carbon counting and technological fixes.

Understood as Anthropomorphic, these diagnoses typically accuse "humans" generally of being behind the climate catastrophe, as opposed to an economic structure and value system of a global minority that ended up impacting the Earth's systems. The Anthropocene, or the era of the new human,<sup>2</sup> has been named and characterized by the global evidence that the Earth's systems (i.e. atmospheric, hydrologic, biospheric, and geologic) have been altered by human activity through GHG emissions as a result of burning fossil fuels and subsequent overheating as a result of the greenhouse effect. This type of climate change diagnosis does not engage in the systems-level thinking and policy-making that meets the true challenges of the climate catastrophe; the climate catastrophe calls for a rethink of the very nature of extractive economic structures.<sup>3</sup> It also avoids identifying the actors that must be held accountable for the climate crisis. For example, only 23 countries (or 12% of the global population) are responsible for half of the historical carbon dioxide emissions, with 150 nations (or 88% of the global population) responsible for the other half.<sup>4</sup> The responsibility for GHG emissions also holds an economic class dimension: 125 of the world's richest billionaires emit more than a million times the average 90% of the global population.<sup>5</sup> It is not just "humans" and their activity, but a very specific type of consumerist, extractive human-centric activity.

1 Climate Change Knowledge Portal, "What is Climate Change?" available at: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

2 John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York. *The Ecological Rift: Capitalisms War on the Earth*. NYU Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg075>.

3 Climate False Solutions, *Hoodwinked in the Hothouse: Resist False Solutions to Climate Change*. [https://climatefalsesolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/HOODWINKED\\_ThirdEdition\\_On-Screen\\_version.pdf](https://climatefalsesolutions.org/wp-content/uploads/HOODWINKED_ThirdEdition_On-Screen_version.pdf) (Climate False Solutions, *Hoodwinked in the Hothouse*)

4 Nadja Popovich and Brad Plumer, "Who Has the Most Historical Responsibility for Climate Change", *The New York Times*, 12 November 2021, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/11/12/climate/cop26-emissions-compensation.html>

5 Oxfam International, *Carbon Billionaires: The Investment Emissions of the World's Richest People*, November 2022, available at <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/carbon-billionaires-the-investment-emissions-of-the-worlds-richest-people-621446/>



### When did the Anthropocene start?

There is an ongoing debate on the starting point of the Anthropocene: some argue that it came with the start of the Agricultural Revolution and the human engagement with large-scale agriculture production that subsequently started to transform Earth's physical landscapes in a more significant way while also emitting GHG.<sup>6</sup> Others argue that the first and second stages of the Anthropocene were the 1820 Industrial Revolution and the 1945 post-World War II economic growth outcomes.<sup>7</sup> Another argument suggests that the cut-off point for the Anthropocene is the period following 1945, due to the sharp, dramatic upturn in "economic growth" – in comparison to the previous gradual growth trends – and, by association, the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>8</sup> This period is also referred to as the "Great Acceleration". These different debates could also suggest the Anthropocene came about gradually, with the mentioned milestones along the way aligning with an exponential increase in GHG emissions and environmental destruction.<sup>9</sup> One critique of the Anthropocene proposes using the term "capitalocene", arguing it is more accurate and refers to a period determined by the dynamics between the environment and market systems, as opposed to limiting it solely to human activity.<sup>10</sup>

This background paper engages with the diagnosis of the climate catastrophe as a direct result of economic, political, and social activities that are rooted in ecologically extractive systems that incentivize material accumulation, despite the irreversible damage and cost on the labor, land, and the whole of Earth's systems. The current moment requires a serious and radical rethinking of policy priorities to meet the severity of the climate catastrophe. This applies across systems and institutions: government level, community level, private sector, non-profits, and, where there are avenues for it, the individual level. Given the severity and, to a degree,

the unpredictability of the climate catastrophe, plans and strategies need to take into consideration the "worst case scenarios" for a more solid base and ability to withstand any climate-related weather emergencies; the co-creating of alternative future visions is imperative for this global ecological transition.<sup>11</sup>

From this global context and diagnosis, we zoom into how the global climate catastrophe manifests at the local level in Lebanon.

## The Manifestation of the Global Climate Catastrophe in Lebanon

MENA countries are among the most vulnerable to climate breakdown: their warming is approximately twice faster than the global average.<sup>12</sup> Lebanon ranks at number 117 out of 182 in the Climate Vulnerability Index. The Climate Vulnerability Index measures a nation's vulnerability and readiness to climate change; lower ranks indicate increased vulnerability and lower readiness.<sup>13</sup> Lebanon's share of global greenhouse gas emissions is 0.07%.<sup>14</sup> This is worsened by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis the World Bank classified as a deliberate depression<sup>15</sup> orchestrated by the nation's elite, and the third worst crisis in modern history.<sup>16</sup> Unemployment was around 30% in 2022, tripling from 11.4% in 2018.<sup>17</sup> An ESCWA study also found that 82% of Lebanon's population lives

6 William F. Ruddiman, "The Anthropogenic Greenhouse Era Began Thousands of Years Ago",

December 2003, *Climatic Change* 61(3):261-293. DOI:10.1023/B:CLIM.0000004577.17928.f

7 Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*, Verso Books, 2016. (Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*)

8 Ian Angus, *Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System*. NYU Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bgz9vp>

9 Carmen G. Gonzalez, "Global Justice in the Anthropocene" in Louis Kotze, ed. *Environmental Law and Governance For the Anthropocene*, Hart Publishing, 2017., Seattle University School of Law Research Paper No. 17-06, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2929042>

10 Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*

11 David M. Iwaniec, et al. *The Co-production of Sustainable Future Scenarios*, *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Volume 197, 2020, 103744, ISSN 0169-2046, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2020.103744> (David M. Iwaniec, et al. *The Co-production of Sustainable Future Scenarios*)

12 G. Zittis, et al. "Climate Change and Weather Extremes in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East," *Reviews of Geophysics*, 60(3), e2021RG000762. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2021RG000762>

13 ND-Gain, Country Index, at <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/>

14 UNDP Climate Promise, Lebanon Country Page, available at <https://climatepromise.undp.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/lebanon>

15 The World Bank, "Lebanon's Crisis: Great Denial in the Deliberate Depression" 25 January 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/01/24/lebanon-s-crisis-great-denial-in-the-deliberate-depression>

16 World Bank, *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, Spring 2021, available at <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/394741622469174252/pdf/Lebanon-Economic-Monitor-Lebanon-Sinking-to-the-Top-3.pdf>

17 World Bank, "Lebanon Country Page", available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/overview#1>

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in multidimensional poverty.<sup>18</sup> Climate change will further exacerbate the country's existing economic contractions: Lebanon's Ministry of Environment estimated a 14% decrease in Lebanon's GDP by 2040 and 32% by 2080.<sup>19</sup>

Socioeconomic challenges aggravate climate change impacts; the strength of economies, institutions, and physical infrastructure enables nations to bounce back from climate shocks or build mitigation and adaptation measures in their policy planning.<sup>20</sup>

The eco-regions in Lebanon are experiencing shifts as a result of the climate catastrophe in multiple streams. Agricultural produce has been negatively impacted by the seasonal shifts, with higher temperatures, less rain, and more extreme weather.<sup>21</sup> Forest fires have been steadily increasing across the country.<sup>22</sup> The non-native invasive lionfish has been moving into the Mediterranean from the Red Sea through the Suez due to the warming of waters<sup>23</sup> and gutting the local populations.<sup>24</sup>

The climate catastrophe only exacerbates already existing ecological destruction caused by the extractive industry, consumerist, and commodity-based economies, coupled with a state that has failed its duty to uphold the public good. These systems are collapsing across all fronts. From the waste crisis to air pollution, from generators, factories, and car-dependent transportation to water pollution, the privatization of the coast, the construction of harmful dams, and irreversible

quarries. The human communities bearing the worst brunt of this are farmers, workers, including sanitation workers, and fishers. The climate catastrophe exacerbates pressure on workers by impacting their livelihoods forcing them to have to work under intense weather conditions.

The country's protracted economic crisis is an additional stressor on its residents: Lebanon witnessed the sharpest decline in its Human Development Index between 2019 and 2021,<sup>25</sup> and, in September 2022, was added to the hunger hotspots, with 2.3 million people experiencing acute food insecurity.<sup>26</sup> In this period, some commentators ironically observed that Lebanon is tackling climate change "by mistake".<sup>27</sup> The economic crises and subsequent energy cuts meant that well-off residents started installing solar panels out of necessity, while the rest struggled in the dark. While this shift could be seen as positive, it is a great example of the "Unjust" Transition that reinforces the dynamics between those with financial, and material access and those without. In Lebanon, for the most part, explicit political demands in line with climate justice are relatively limited due to other seemingly more immediate crises. However, environmental justice battlefields are all over Lebanon's landscape.<sup>28</sup> With or without the climate catastrophe, Lebanon's ecology is in deep destruction and unaccountable disarray. The JET is a framework and outline to move away from such intrinsically destructive systems.

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18 ESCWA, Multidimensional Poverty in Lebanon (2019-2021). Painfully Realities and Uncertain Prospects..[https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-multidimensional\\_poverty\\_in\\_lebanon\\_policy\\_brief\\_-\\_en.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/news/docs/21-00634-multidimensional_poverty_in_lebanon_policy_brief_-_en.pdf)

19 Najat Rochdi, "Climate change in Lebanon: a Threat Multiplier" Op-Ed by the UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon, 1 September 2021 <https://lebanon.un.org/en/142648-climate-change-lebanon-threat-multiplier>

20 J. T. Jalles, "Financial Crises and Climate Change" Comparative Economic Studies, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41294-023-00209-7>

21 Yara El Murr, "Warm Winter Woes: How Global Warming is Affecting Local Agriculture and Food", The Public Source, 12 May 2023, <https://thepublicsource.org/climate-change-agriculture>

22 Madelaine Edwards, "Lebanon at increased wildfire risk with Earth's second-warmest March on record" L'Orient and AFP, 6 April 2023, <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1334019/lebanon-at-increased-wildfire-risk-with-earths-second-warmest-march-on-record.html>; and Lebanese Ministry of Environment, Wildfires in Lebanon 2008-2021, December 2021. <http://ioe-firelab.balamand.edu.lb/ForestFires/ForestFires2008-2021.pdf>

23 Chloe Domat, "Pisces non grata: New Sea Species Invade Lebanon's Waters" Middle East Eye, 21 December 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/pisces-non-grata-hundreds-new-sea-species-invade-lebanons-waters>

24 Sarah Dadouch, "Farewell, Octopus; Hello, Lionfish: Lebanon's Warming Seas Change Fishing", The Washington Post, 8 September 2022 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/08/lebanon-warming-sea-lionfish-fishermen/>

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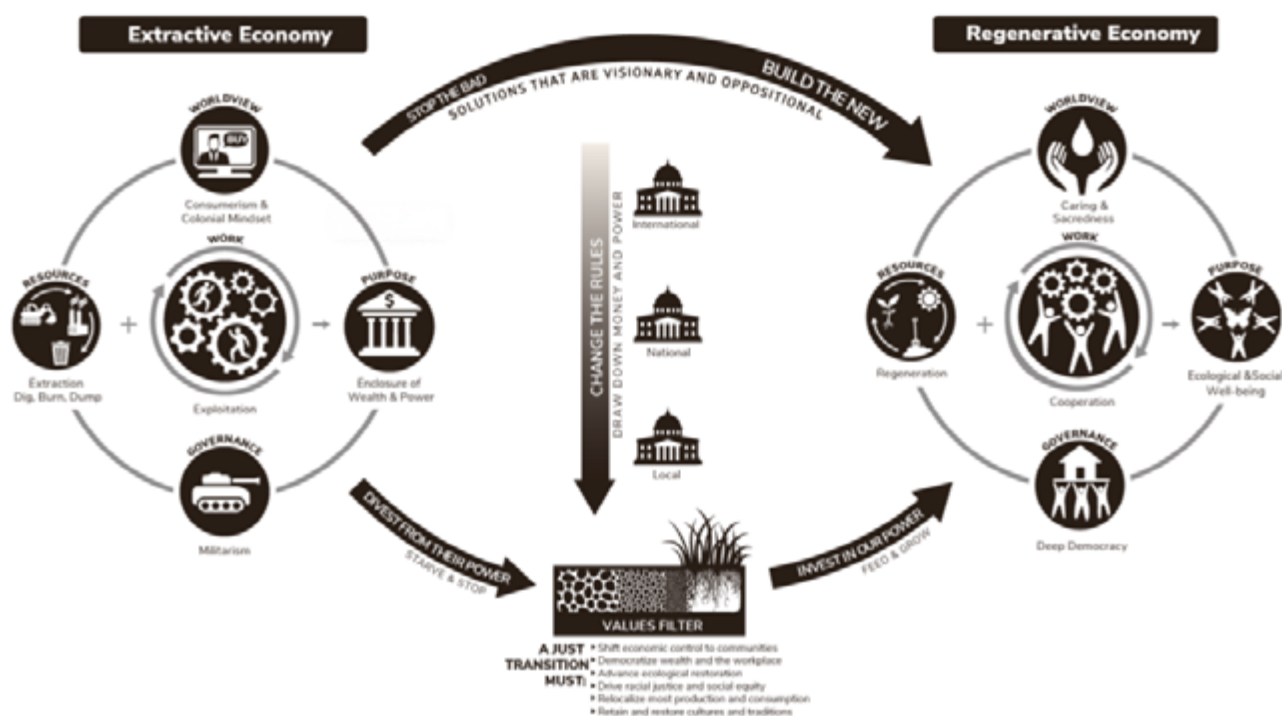
25 Ghida Ismail. "Lebanon must return to human development", L'Orient Today, 18 October 2022, available at <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1315002/lebanon-must-return-to-human-development.html>

26 FAO, "Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP Early Warnings on Acute Food Insecurity", June to November 2023 Outlook, available at [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000149627/download/?\\_ga=2.228803039.2129092043.1685390926-1035630509.1684984962](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000149627/download/?_ga=2.228803039.2129092043.1685390926-1035630509.1684984962)

27 This view is referring to Lebanon's pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions and increase renewable energy production by 20% by 2030. Alternative Lebanon. Lebanon is Fighting Climate Change by Mistake. Retrieved from: [https://www.instagram.com/p/CvMvVrDsLf6/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/p/CvMvVrDsLf6/?img_index=1)

28 Global Atlas of environmental justice, "Country Profile: Lebanon", available at: <https://ejatlas.org/country/lebanon>

## Just Transition Framework Design: Wisdom of Frontline Communities & Leaders with the Support of Movement Generation <sup>29</sup>



### Defining the Just Environmental Transition

The Just Environmental Transition is a proposed framework solution to harmful industries, evolving as a solution to the global ecological and climate catastrophe. It was historically initiated by labor unions and environmental justice groups in the United States, from low-income communities and communities of color working in and around polluting industries. It has developed into a framework to shift power

structures and economies based on pure extraction (extraction of land and labor) to ones of regenerative economies.

There are numerous definitions and priorities for the JET. Within the global climate movement, the definition has evolved - and continues to evolve - since its inception.

<sup>29</sup> Climate change alliance, "Just Transition a Framework for Change", available at <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/> (Climate change alliance, "Just Transition a Framework for Change")

## Some Different Definitions of the JET

**The Indigenous Environmental Network**, formed in 1990, outlines the respect for the sacredness of Earth Mother for the Just Transition. The network affirms the need for restoring indigenous lifeways of responsibility and respect to the sacred Creation Principles and Natural Laws of Mother Earth and Father Sky, to live in peace with each other and to ensure harmony with nature, the Circle of Life, and within all Creation.<sup>30</sup>

**The Just Transition Alliance**, formed in 1997, describes it as a “principle, a process, and a practice. The principle of just transition is that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist. The process for achieving this vision should be a fair one that should not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets.”<sup>31</sup>

**The Transnational Institute**, an international research and advocacy institute based in Amsterdam, describes the Just Transition as a “a systemic turn, through genuinely democratic means, away from exploitation, extraction, and alienation, and towards systems of production and reproduction that are focused on human well-being and the regeneration of ecosystems.”<sup>32</sup>

**The Climate Justice Alliance**, formed in 2013, outlines the Just Transition as a “vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.”<sup>33</sup>

**The International Labour Organization (ILO)** defined the Just Transition in 2015 as “greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind”.<sup>34</sup> A more recent policy brief from the ILO adds that the Just Transition “macroeconomic stabilization, a strong link between social protection and employment, as well as skills promotion to support enterprises and workers throughout the transition and particularly in sectors negatively impacted by climate change or decarbonization efforts”. The ILO adds that a just transition “without social protection for all [...] the transition may leave some behind, risking its acceptance and sustainability. Universal social protection systems are thus crucial to ensure that the transition will be socially just.”<sup>35</sup>

In the COP27, descriptions of a Just Transition for the Arab States at an ILO and EU Commission event described the Just Transition as a set of policies that hold “the possibility of enhancing economic growth and value addition in agriculture, industry and services” and has “huge potential for job creation in a diversified economy.”<sup>36</sup>

The European Commission outlines a Just Transition Mechanism as a tool “to ensure the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens fairly, leaving no one behind.”<sup>37</sup>

Unions in the MENA working with IndustryAll, a global union representing 50 million workers in 140 countries, demand a Just Transition and state that “The rights and needs of workers should be at the center of any Just Transition conversation.” The Unions also add that if “changes are not done with workers’ economic activity in mind, the transition is not just.”<sup>38</sup>

30 Indigenous Environmental Network, “Indigenous Principles of Just Transition”, available at <https://www.ienearth.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/IENJustTransitionPrinciples.pdf>

31 Just Transition Alliance, “Just Transition Principles”, available at: <https://jtalliance.org/what-is-just-transition/> (Just Transition Alliance, “Just Transition Principles”)

32 Transnational Institute, “From Crisis to Transformation: What is a Just Transition?” 13 September 2022, available at: <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/from-crisis-to-transformation>

33 Climate change alliance, “Just Transition a Framework for Change”, and Just Transition Alliance, “Just Transition Principles”.

34 ILO, “Green Jobs”, [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS\\_824102/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/WCMS_824102/lang-en/index.htm)

35 ILO, Just Translation Policy Brief, Janu 2023, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---emp\\_ent/documents/publication/wcms\\_867426.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_867426.pdf)

36 ILO, “Road to COP28: Just Transition for Arab States” 24 November 2024, [https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS\\_862372/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_862372/lang-en/index.htm)

37 European Commission, “The Just Transition Mechanism: Making Sure No One is Left Behind”, available at [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism_en)

38 Industrial, “Unions in MENA demand a Just Transition” 24 January 2023 <https://www.industrial-union.org/unions-in-mena-demand-a-just-transition>

Today, the JET has also been co-opted by the same entities that environmental and climate justice communities and activists all over the world lobby against. Governments and companies around the world, including fossil fuel companies, are using the JET to continue profiting from the climate transition by leading in developing technologies that, when implemented, are not true solutions and continue to reinforce the environmental harms.<sup>39</sup> These companies also lobby and push for policies that would integrate these false solutions into national and global strategies.<sup>40</sup> As environmental advocates warn, it is imperative to be aware of this cooptation to resist emptying the JET of its intended content.

“Who is held accountable for environmental degradation and climate change? Is it us as societies? We barely produce or consume carbon. Our water consumption is low and pales in comparison to Americans or Europeans. I imagine if I go to my community [in Lebanon] and tell them, «Let’s do a JET and the situation will be solved», I don’t think they would even care. The marginalized communities in Lebanon can’t even grow food; we don’t even have a place to grow it. We don’t have the right to do anything economic. We don’t have political rights...Those who should be held responsible for all this are the imperialist regimes that control politics, and they are also a donor to this project. We are sitting on their lap and engaging with ideas from them [...] We must ask this as clearly as possible. Who will hold responsibility? The major nations that are producing carbon? Or will it be a refugee or a citizen that holds the responsibility?”  
Wesam Sabaaneh, Jafra Association

Jafra Association is a Palestinian Youth Organization working on a participatory approach to promote community resilience in Palestinian society.

## Perceptions and Priorities for a JET in Lebanon

This section outlines the perceptions, priorities, and challenges for a JET in Lebanon, based on the ARI’s Lebanon consultations, followed by the roles that CSOs can take in a JET in Lebanon. One of the perceptions participants vocalized

regarding the JET framework is that it is imported from the West and not homegrown. One of the participants at the July Lebanon consultation meeting expressed frustration that terms and ideas coming from outside the regional context felt very forced. In their words, “There is a form of distorting terminologies. These terms that instead of supporting us, end up adding limitations, and disagreements, while also changing local priorities.” The historic global power dynamics between the core and the periphery do impact the timing of JET-related projects, particularly donor-driven agendas.

“We can’t have environmental justice for our resources without talking about the countries we share the resources with. The question of how what is happening in other countries impacts us in Lebanon, from seeking refuge due to war or because of the crisis happening in other countries, is also a major factor that impacts the Just Transition, Environmental Justice, and Economic justice.” - Samar Khalil, activist and member of the Waste Management Coalition

The Waste Management Coalition is a coalition of individuals and groups working to better coordinate efforts around waste in Lebanon.

A Just Environmental Transition in Lebanon – whether perceived in the above terms or not – will need to revolve around and prioritize collective well-being, a solid network for universal basic services, and regenerative economies. Based on inputs at the Lebanon consultation meeting, justice, and accountability are at the core of this framework’s understanding of the polluting perpetrators, from international corporations, oil-rich Arab autocracies, donors, and projects with cross-boundary implications, such as dams. The JET will be part and parcel of societal transformation, and not solely that of a carbon-free economy, be it in Lebanon or the rest of MENA. In the context of Lebanon, this societal transformation would mean centering all the groups that have historically been marginalized, exploited, and prevented from fully exercising their basic human rights, including women, Palestinian refugees, Syrian refugees, migrant workers, stateless individuals, nomadic communities, and low-income communities. The JET in Lebanon would be part of a shift away from the sectarian political system and would be rooted in feminist values.

“Would a JET in a sectarian political system be truly Just?” Julien Jreissati, Greenpeace MENA

Greenpeace MENA works to offer solutions to environmental issues in the Middle East and North Africa region, including the climate emergency.

39 Climate False Solutions, Hoodwinked in the Hothouse

40 Tni, “Just Transition: How Environmental Justice Organisations and Trade Unions Are Coming Together for Social and Environmental Transformation” 11 February 2020, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/just-transition>



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The JET in Lebanon and MENA requires demilitarization and engagement with the impacts of war, holding accountable those entities responsible for arms sales, armed conflicts, forced migration, and ecocide. In the Lebanon context, the work that activists, grassroots organizations, community, and other stakeholders can do is build a stronger, more coordinated system to face the needs that this ecological transition is demanding and be a solid alternative for the collapsing economic and political systems. The JET in Lebanon would be paid for by the culprits behind every environmental injustice across the country, as a form of accountability for the damage they have caused.

Below are the other overarching themes under the umbrella of the JET that the CSOs in the Lebanon ARI consultations outlined. One recurrent idea is ensuring an intersectional holistic method of thinking and viewing separate sectors as complementary across regions. There were general agreements and a few tensions; this list aims to capture the essence of what was discussed:

- Social protection and universal basic services (energy, health, housing, and education for all): COVID-19 globally and the economic crisis in Lebanon stressed the importance of a safety net to ensure services continue to function regardless of unexpected shocks. With the climate catastrophe disrupting the day-to-day economic activity, the bare minimum is for people to maintain access to basic services.
- Regenerative, circular, and alternative economies: the JET in Lebanon would work and develop an economy that is regenerative and respectful of the social and ecological metabolism. It would reimagine a development, prosperity, and progress model relevant to and anchored at the local level. It would protect and support the informal sector and build off solidarity economies, mutual aid, and community-led initiatives, including those that stemmed out of the 17 October uprisings and other mass protests demanding change.
- Centered around just and dignified work: The JET outlines a green economy and the creation and maintenance of green jobs, from renewable energy to sanitation to weather crisis responses. Workers in the JET should also have the right to unionize, regardless of their nationalities. Labor conditions will integrate and be mindful of extreme weather due to the climate catastrophe (e.g. limits to working under certain weather conditions without material ramifications). Other priorities mentioned in the consultation that fall under this notion are:
  - Safety at work, and protection from any form of harassment, including discrimination based on age, nationality, gender, ethnicity, and physical and mental abilities.
  - Create a supportive environment that would help workers acquire the technical and leadership skills to adapt to change, including technological and environmental challenges.
  - Abolish the Kafala system and work arrangements that reinforce injustice and inequality. The Kafala system is a sponsorship system that outlines the relationship between migrant workers and their employers and traps migrant workers in harmful work and life conditions.
- Adaptive to worst-case scenarios of the climate crisis: The JET in Lebanon should strengthen and support the crisis response network for extreme weather events (e.g. forest fires, droughts). Preparation is crucial to avoid patchy and insufficient responses. As Hanane Hassan from the Shouf Biosphere Reserve described, this would entail a degree of “smart adaptation to the climate changes that are happening around us; smart means an adaptation that happens through innovative solutions and traditional systems that allow for continuity and a circular economy.”
- A truly inclusive, representative, and participatory transition: Historically, Lebanon has marginalized huge segments of the communities and reinforced a cycle of injustice and marginalization as a result of government policies (e.g. refugee communities, migrant and domestic workers, stateless individuals). It is the duty of people working on climate and ecological justice to reach out to communities across the country that are most harmed by current and historic injustices.

“The Right to Exist is a non-negotiable, basic agreement.” Mourad Ayyash, Socio-Economic Action Committee (SEAC)

SEAC is a collective established as a catalyst for building an inclusive solidarity economy in the most pauperized and excluded areas of Lebanon, countering dominant exclusionary socio-economic models.

- Permaculture, agroecology, and sustainable agriculture: The JET in Lebanon aims for the country to be food sovereign, improving local production for the right to healthy and culturally relevant food, adaptive to climate catastrophe. It will aim to integrate permaculture and agroecological practices in its production. Lebanon has a heavy reliance on imported agricultural goods, with 60%

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to 80% of the food supply coming from abroad.<sup>41</sup>

- **Energy sovereign:** The JET in Lebanon aims to meet the country's energy needs using internal resources, particularly renewable sources from solar, wind, and hydropower.
- **Transportation:** The JET will have public and accessible transportation for riders across the country and is a transportation most dependent on renewable energy.
- **Accessible:** The communication in the JET must be accessible in terms of languages and terminologies. For example, academic institutions have been doing a significant amount of research related to climate and environmental changes and producing knowledge on alternatives and solutions to problems in Lebanon. However, the outputs are often inaccessible. CSOs could work with researchers and universities to democratize the work and simplify terms.
- **Accountable:** the JET will center around justice and accountability, including implementing environmental laws, training environmental lawyers, and so on.

“From a labor perspective, when talking about a just transition, it is important to remember that it is a term that comes from workers...I consider the real role to be played has to be within unions and among workers. Any development in the transitions which does not center workers will simply not reach its goals.” - Waleed Olleik, IndustryALL Global Union

IndustryALL Global Union represents 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors working for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world.

## Challenges CSOs Face in Relation to the JET

Participants in the consultations brought up the following challenges and considerations for a JET in Lebanon:

- **Working - and competing - in silos:** One participant working in the urban planning field said that “the main problem, even with studying solutions, is working in silos. The thinking is happening on an isolated level within the topic that they themselves know. You need

to think about it all because they're all connected and they all influence each other...solutions are not all-encompassing.” Another participant said if organizations working on the ground coordinated better and shared resources, the impact would be more significant.

- **The need to collectively plan on the longer term:** Having more communities, groups, and CSOs plan and collectively work on a longer term would be especially constructive in the face of climate catastrophe and in achieving the goals of JET. This includes having collective budgeting as well.
- **Absence of coordination between labor unions and CSOs in Lebanon:** this impacts the ability to unify the efforts for a more cohesive and stronger front.
- **Top-down policy-making:** One participant said “Policies and strategies being implemented are not coming from the ground. They're coming from international donors to help them but [the communities are] not the ones putting them.” This is also the case for the local governments: they do not engage with those impacted by policy implementation. This ends up being harmful to the very people who are meant to be served.
- **Imported concepts:** Importing and using concepts from industrialized nations is often ineffective and without practical meaning in the context where the concepts are expected to apply.
- **Haphazard, insufficient access to information:** There is also a need for a greater understanding of Lebanon's authorities and the ways they interact with each other on the ground to better pressure relevant authorities.
- **It is recommended for CSOs to coordinate and more effectively share information and experiences.** Centralizing data on matters related to the JET would also be constructive for the collective work.
- **Engaging with the reality of a weak public sector, non-sovereign nation:** The JET around the world depends on strong, effective governments with the capacity to properly implement massive projects, with the public good in mind, and with high environmental considerations. As Soha Mneimneh said, “A lot of these points are irrelevant with a collapsed state. We need to think of alternative economies in the long term given the global situation.” This is not the case in Lebanon, where the financial crisis has exacerbated the worst forms of extreme libertarianism, where there is close to zero government regulation and free reins of the private sector.<sup>42</sup>

41 Exploring alternative food initiatives in Lebanon. Jibal.

42 The Century Foundation, “Lebanon Is the Experiment That Shows Neoliberalism's Failure”, 16 April 2020, available at <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/lebanon-experiment-shows-neoliberalisms-failure/>

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- Low and devalued national budgets for environmental matters: This applies all across, including the ability to apply environmental laws, thorough environmental impact assessments, or to initiate effective projects.
- The absence of an independent, transparent, judicial system: This is a challenge for CSOs when working to achieve accountability, including for environmental and climate injustices. As one participant described it, “If Lebanon had a true, proper, transparent judicial system, the nation would be in a much better shape.”

“In our world, we can’t imagine a world with a company like Total...We are not just asking them to close and stop operations because their executives and board take millions and the workers are the ones that are on the losing end. This is why we have a responsibility to work with the people who represent the labor force in these companies to think together to do this transition in a way that is just and provides for them and their family’s future.” Julien Jreissati, Greenpeace MENA

- Lack of national belonging: This challenge was described in the consultation to illustrate comparisons with other contexts where there is comparably more ease with political transitions due to a degree of unity in identity, which Lebanon arguably lacks. As one participant described it, “We don’t have a government in Lebanon, nor do we feel a belonging [to a nation].” Another participant responded to this and said: “It’s okay to not necessarily have one unified national identity, and it’s in the plurality that makes it richer. What matters is some agreement on values and engagement with the land.”
- Increase in worry and anxiety: This was described as a challenge in mobilizing and engaging in political change, particularly on job protection and financial stability in the transition. Without sustainable economies and jobs, people are more vulnerable. As one participant described it, “In countries like Lebanon where there is corruption, this adds to the levels of anxiety when it comes to how the transition will play out.”
- Not knowing where to find solutions: The absence of a clear reference for true, all-encompassing frameworks for solutions could make it challenging for CSO to engage with questions of the JET for this work.
- Misinformation on social media: Misinformation on social media is impacting how people think about climate change and solutions. This is the result of a lack of monitoring and accountability in this space.

“For us to be able to lobby and advocate better, we need to have the bridges, knowledge, and tools to think about these concepts.” - Soha Mneimneh, Urban Planner and Activist

## What Can CSOs Do for the JET?

Below is a list of ideas that came up in the consultations on what the roles of CSOs can be in the JET:

- Mainstream alternatives: CSOs could work on disseminating the solutions that already exist. As Antoine Kallab from the Nature Conservation Center stated, “The solutions on a technical level exist but the challenge remains in raising awareness about their impact. Awareness should tackle the various audiences – and not just be limited to a small video on the news. We won’t get anywhere if the solutions aren’t accessible.”
- Coordinate among different groups: CSOs can take on the responsibility of coordinating the JET work among the different regions. This includes youth groups, student clubs, and scouts. A few participants stressed the importance of preparing workers’ unions for the JET, with the support, referral, and recommendations from CSOs and experts to support workers in this transition. One idea mentioned is the importance of CSOs taking the initiative to connect the efforts of the environmental movements and groups to the labor movements.
- Unite on common values: A primary expectation expressed in the consultations is to have a bare minimum agreement on what values and visions CSOs want for the country within the JET.
- Specify/outline responsibilities of policy and law-makers in Lebanon: This could include an in-depth engagement with the specific duties that the different implementing agencies have, from public institutions to international agencies. CSOs can then also take on the role of monitoring policy-makers working on the JET.
- Create a knowledge bank: It is important to have a centralized space on knowledge related to climate change in Lebanon and the region, in addition to sources/resources related to the JET, including terminologies. One participant in the consultation said they do not know where to go for climate solutions. In this, CSOs can engage with universities in Lebanon and have access to the data they hold. One participant said that there seems to be a gap between universities and research centers and the rest of society. Working on bridging this

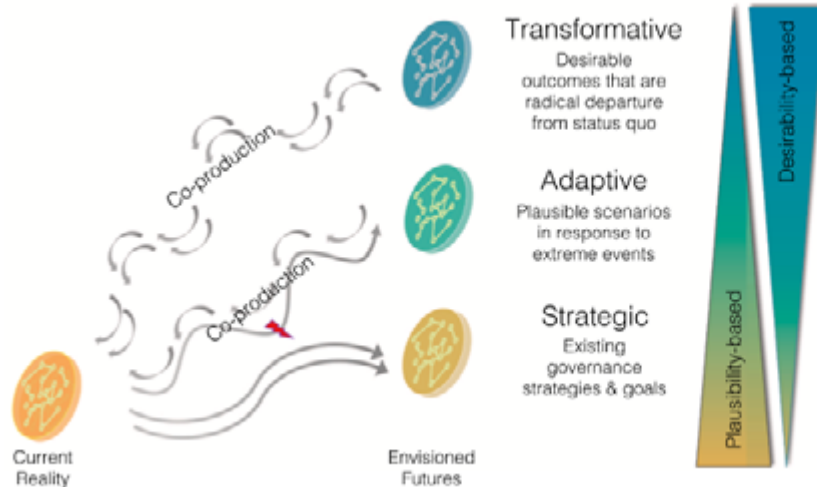


Fig. 1. The Sustainable Futures Scenarios (SFS) framework comparing strategic, adaptive, and transformative scenarios on a plausibility-desirability continuum and the diverse approaches in scenario development. Gray arrows represent transition pathways from current reality to achieve the future scenario. In the strategic scenario, the transition pathway is projected forward from the current state; in the transformative scenario, the transition pathway is backcasted based on future goals; in the adaptive scenario, the pathway is developed from a combination of projections and backcasting. Red glyph indicates potential disturbance(s) (e.g., an extreme event) that the adaptive scenario addresses along the transition pathway. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

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gap could lead to more effective results, especially since universities tend to have more legitimacy than some local CSOs in Lebanon.

- Work with the media: CSOs can work with the media to frame climate and just transition matters in a way that could build some degree of public awareness and support of what JET entails.
- Work on developing school curricula for the JET: This should include new education curriculums to have a new generation ready for the transition and be ahead of the curve. It would be a new generation creating new opportunities and not just filling in gaps.
- Incentivize initiatives that have the public interest at heart: This could prioritize the ones that have positive impacts on their environmental surroundings.

“Who is the worker usually? The vision is of the person who works with their hands. This vision of the worker also creates a separation among unions. For example, engineers, doctors, and lawyers don’t consider themselves workers. It is unfortunate. Same with teachers. There are so many splits. We don’t all consider ourselves workers! There are classes of workers. How can we unify the understanding of work and the idea of time, effort, and energy whatever the nature of the work? We need to revisit our understanding of work. These splits also translate into unions demanding individual solutions rather than more collective ones.”

- Chadi Faraj, Riders Rights

Riders Rights is a grassroots organization aiming to make public transportation accessible to all.

## Conclusion

To meet the severity of the climate catastrophe, the global and local economies require a radical rethink across policy levels; it means economies and societies need to operate within the planet’s ecological limits to ensure human continuity.<sup>43</sup> In this context, the Just Environmental Transition for Lebanon – like other parts of the world – can become the opportunity for a more just societal reorganization. In what ways can transition adapt to the changing climate and be equipped for the worst-case scenarios that come with it while building alternative systems? How can the JET framework pave the way for Lebanon to come out of the economic crisis’s worst impacts? What frameworks, policies, funding mechanisms, and technologies can shift Lebanon’s current circumstances? These are all questions that still need to be addressed. As the participants in the ARI Lebanon consultations started to outline, this is a lot to be done in the face of mounting challenges, but it is possible.

43 G.K. Charnois, “Degrowth, Steady State and Circular Economies: Alternative Discourses to Economic Growth”, Society Register 2021. Vol. 5 No.3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/sr.2021.5.3.05>

44 David M. Iwaniec, et al. The Co-production of Sustainable Future Scenarios



# Annexes – The Consultations’ Agendas and Participants

## Annex 1: Organizations Represented in the July 2023 Lebanon Consultation

Thirty-two individuals representing 29 organizations were part of the first Lebanon consultation. Some participants came in their capacity as independent researchers, activists, and community members. Names have been omitted to respect their right to privacy.

This consultation meeting aims to understand what exactly constitutes a just transition in Lebanon, what are the different perspectives, who works on just transition in Lebanon and what are the current policies, how such a transition can best be achieved, in addition to the political obstacles and opportunities in this context. Participants will discuss, debate, and ideate on the process of just transition in Lebanon. The series of consultation meetings will result in the publication of a background mapping paper on the civil society actors who work on just transition in Lebanon.

	Name
1	<a href="#">Agricultural Movement in Lebanon</a>
2	<a href="#">CBI</a>
3	<a href="#">Citizens &amp; Politics</a>
4	<a href="#">Difaf</a>
5	<a href="#">EITI</a>
6	<a href="#">Coalition for Energy Governance</a>
7	<a href="#">Environment &amp; Sustainable Development Unit</a>
8	<a href="#">Green Mount Recycling</a>
9	<a href="#">Green Track</a>
10	<a href="#">Greenpeace MENA</a>
11	<a href="#">IndustriAll</a>
12	<a href="#">International Alert</a>
13	<a href="#">Jafra Association</a>
14	<a href="#">Jibal</a>
15	<a href="#">Lebanese Union of People with Disability</a>
16	<a href="#">Lebanon Eco-Movement</a>
17	<a href="#">Nahnoo</a>
18	<a href="#">Public Works Studio</a>
19	<a href="#">Rasseef 22</a>
20	<a href="#">Riders Rights</a>
21	<a href="#">Sikka Saida</a>
22	<a href="#">Society for the Protection of Nature</a>
23	<a href="#">Siyada</a>
24	<a href="#">Socio-Economic Action Collective SEAC</a>
25	<a href="#">Waste Management Coalition</a>
26	<a href="#">The Other Dada</a>
27	<a href="#">Thought for Food</a>
28	<a href="#">Union of Total and Petrol Workers</a>
29	<a href="#">World Benchmarking Alliance</a>

## Annex 2: Organizations Represented in the October 2023 Lebanon Consultation

	Organization Represented
1	Chouf Reserve & Biosphere
2	Greenpeace MENA
3	IndustriAll,
4	Al-Warsha/Knowledge Workshop
5	Lebanon Eco-Movement
6	Nature Conservation Center
7	Public Works Studio
8	Riders Rights
9	Union of Total and Petrol Workers
10	Waste Management Coalition

## Annex 3: 12 July 2023 Consultation Meeting Agenda

Time	Session
9:00 am - 9:20 am	Welcome, coffee and check-in at Gefinor Rotana
9:20 am-9:40am	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda</li> <li>• Presentation about ARI &amp; the Environmental Politics Program</li> <li>• What is the Green Bridge Project &amp; how does today's consultation meeting fit into it?</li> </ul>
9:40am - 12:10pm	What is a Just Environmental Transition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick overview of the history of the JET.</li> <li>• What are the guiding principles for a Just Transition in Lebanon?</li> <li>• Where are principles' status in relation to the Just Transition in Lebanon? - Who are the communities that are most impacted?</li> </ul>
12:10 pm-12:30 pm	Coffee Break
12:30pm - 2:30pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do CSOs need?</li> <li>• What are the challenges and successes you deal with in relation to this (as a policy framework and otherwise)?</li> <li>• What would be needed by CSOs for the Just Transition?</li> <li>• What can ARI do to support existing work and organizations, particularly with engaging with policymakers?</li> </ul>
2:30pm	Lunch at Gefinor Rotana

## Annex 4: 10 October 2023 Consultation Meeting Agenda

Time	Session
9:00am	Arrival & Check-in
9:30am - 9:45am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Round of Intros</li> <li>Presenting Schedule</li> <li>Quick reminder of ARI + Green Bridge Project.</li> </ul>
9:45am - 11:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present Backgrounder: process, outline, and the main findings. Collect input, reflections, and critiques on it.</li> <li>How can this document be useful to work CSOs are doing?</li> </ul>
11:00am to 11:30am	Break
11:30am to 1:30pm	Systems Thinking Exercise (where we are, where we want to be, how to get there, who does what and how?)
1:30pm to 2:00pm	<p>Specific Recommendations &amp; Plans</p> <p>Explain that this will feed into action plan on what we want to do with different entities. Who do we want to engage with? (e.g. EU, municipalities, etc.)</p>

## Annex 5: CSO Mapping

As stated above, the Just Environmental Transition is intrinsic to the country's societal transformation. This section aims to map the CSOs that work on matters that fall under any of the frameworks and topics outlined by CSOs. Their work is a piece of the puzzle that outlines alternative, just, ecological systems that replace the extractive, exploitative, and unsustainable structures currently in place. The list can be found in this Excel sheet document.

### Typology for choosing these organizations:

1. Works in Lebanon
2. Governmental, non-governmental, or private entities working on environmental matters, including sustainable technology, ecological economies, etc.
3. Their work falls under one or more of the categories listed in the section on JET Perceptions and Priorities in Lebanon.

### The mapping aims to fill in the following information on these groups:

- Name of Organizations, Initiatives, Groups, etc.
- Region/Bioregion
- Description: Who are they, what do they do, and why?
- Profile of the organizations' members (environment, technical, activist, etc.)
- Formal, informal, non-profit, social business, etc.
- What are past/current projects or campaigns they are working on?
- Are they part of any bigger coalitions or movements? How do they interact with other members of the landscape (think tanks, municipalities, unions, CSOs, etc.)
- Their position and understanding of Just Transition (if applicable)

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## About the Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is an independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change and social justice. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality, and gender equality.

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