

# ONE MILLION CLIMATE JOBS

*Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC) Staff*

The AIDC produces and promotes alternative knowledge and analysis to enable popular movements for social, economic and ecological justice to engage with a wide spectrum of organisations of civil society, opinion shapers and policy makers on strategies for sustainable development.

*The prospects of changing our methods of production can look extremely bleak if its business as usual unless we come across a vision such as laid out in this article. But it is not merely a vision. It is backed up with solid research on the costs of changing to renewable energy sources and the impact that will have on the living conditions of the poor, job creation, our social relations and our environment.*

**W**e have been living through a persisting global economic crisis. A global crisis of climate change is taking place at the same time. A South African reality is a jobs crisis. We need solutions to all three. Urgently. A new 64-page report by the Alternative Information & Development Centre (AIDC) provides the detail and extensive research showing how this can be done and financed. The focus is on South Africa, but the remedies are broadly replicable across the globe.

## **NO FALSE CHOICES**

The whole world is full of voices saying

there is a stark choice between jobs and action on climate. In South Africa, they tell us to choose between jobs for coal miners and saving the planet.

The either/or choice is misconceived. There are many immediately available alternatives – with (insufficiently recognised) money available to finance them.

These alternatives include:

- (a) A decent public-sector job or monthly government grant for everyone who loses their job because of a shift to renewable energy.
- (b) Monthly government grants for every subsistence farmer who loses their livelihood because of climate change.
- (c) Creating a million jobs by tackling climate change.

## **THE URGENCY OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

This makes meeting these needs urgent. The most serious climate changes include the following:

1. Drought, heat and storms kill – and will increasingly kill – crops. In the economic system we live in, that means famine.
2. Rising sea levels and terrible storms flood and ruin – and will increasingly flood and ruin – many of the world’s cities. The recent floods in Johannesburg and Durban and the havoc in Durban Harbour are timely harbingers.

3. Climate change means – and will increasingly mean – economic suffering. The governments who have done nothing about the climate for so long will say we must all sacrifice together to save the Earth. We will sacrifice. The elite will not.
4. Climate change means – and will increasingly mean – hundreds of millions of refugees globally, as they flee droughts, famines, floods and wars. They will increasingly drown in the seas, or walk to borders defended by machine guns.
5. Climate change means – and will increasingly mean – an orgy of racism and xenophobia. On one side of the border, the mass of hungry and homeless; on the other side new racism as justifications for keeping them out. And everywhere, amid chaos and want, governments and the elite will look for scapegoats.
6. Climate change means – and will increasingly mean – war. In Sudan and Kenya, we have seen poor people killing each other for water and grass for their animals. That is only a beginning.

## **RURAL PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINE**

The recent drought in many parts of the country killed animals and crops; in the Western Cape, the killing >>

continues. This is climate change. Conditions might get better but in the long term, they will get much worse.

But it is not just drought. Temperature increases, on their own, reduce crop yields and pasture grass. This is climate change. Some people do not want to say this to farmers. But farmers and poor people deserve the truth. They have been lied to, and their livelihoods are being taken away. They have every right to be very angry.

Action by rural people is required to force government to give them what they deserve. Monthly government grants – like those paid to pensioners and the disabled – are the first of their needs. And, as climate change bites, poor rural people will need more land, and better land. Land reform is their second requirement.

## WE CAN CREATE JOBS

Everywhere, there is the need for jobs. Private companies and the market have created unemployment. A publicly-driven attack on climate change can create a million climate jobs.

Here's how:

- We need to cut emissions from burning coal, oil and gas by 90%. Instead of cutting back on production and consumption – the standard expectations – we can stop burning coal and gas. We can make almost all our electricity from wind and solar power.
- We can provide buses and cars that are comfortable, fast, reliable and cheap. While taking many cars off the roads, we can run cars, buses and trains on renewable electricity, not oil.
- We can insulate houses so they lose less energy. We can heat homes with solar energy. We can build millions of new public houses that are heated and cooled with renewable electricity.
- We can transform industry and agriculture to use less energy.

And to do all this will create at least a million jobs.

|                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Renewable Energy              | 250,000 jobs          |
| Public Transport              | 390,000 jobs          |
| Construction                  | 200,000 jobs          |
| Agriculture                   | 100,000 jobs          |
| Waste, Industry and Education | 110,000 jobs          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>1,000,000 jobs</b> |

With those jobs, research shows we can cut South Africa's climate-changing emissions by at least 75% in twenty years.

And those jobs could be in South Africa. The wind turbines, solar cells and electric vehicles could be made in factories here. Sometimes, when people talk about renewable energy, they just mean wind farms. But most of the jobs in renewable energy are in making the equipment, not in maintenance. These are factory jobs. They are needed here.

And, all the above is without any mention of water. Yet, tackling the many urgent water-related issues creates both an enormous number of jobs, along with the economic and social benefits of the local industries waiting to be developed.

The following are illustrative

- **WATER LEAKS:** In the midst of the devastating drought that grips various parts of South Africa, precious water is lost to leaks. And lost in enormous quantities. The latest number for documented leaks is: Four hundred and forty four thousand million litres, lost at a huge direct financial cost of R6 799 314 000.00. Fixing leaks is labour intensive involving large numbers of semi-skilled workers.
- **RAINWATER HARVESTING (RWH):** As with water leaks, harvesting rainwater is not rocket science. Imagine if every South African home, structure and building, other than shacks, were obliged, by law,

to collect and store rainwater off roofs. Eighty per cent of South Africa's approximately 10 million houses are formal dwellings. This means that, apart from all the other buildings in the country, some 8 million are available to be considered for RWH. This means a lot of water that would otherwise be wasted. It additionally creates more than sufficient demand to sustain a large growth in the local RWH market. And it means the creation of a large number of jobs.

- **CAPE TOWN AS A WATER CATCHMENT AREA:** Three times more rain falls in this catchment area than is actually used! But most of this huge amount of additional water goes unharvested in a City that faces running out of water in the next few months. Local industries – and jobs – are waiting to catch this huge volume of wasted water.
- **SOLAR WATER HEATERS (SWH):** Apart from the previously mentioned several million households waiting to harvest rainwater, there are the large number of public and private buildings in need of SWHs. Reducing the use of electricity saves huge amounts of water. Water, in colossal amounts, is used in the life-cycle of electricity. Installing SWHs wherever possible can't be done without creating jobs. In large numbers. Moreover, this installation creates more than sufficient local demand for even profit-maximising industries to be attracted.
- **CEILING INSTALLATION.** Houses are still being built, in 2017, without ceilings. This means a huge waste of energy for people needing to make their houses less cold. Saving energy simultaneously means saving water while creating jobs.

## DECENT JOBS

Most of the water-related work ought to be the responsibility of the public sector, especially if climate change is viewed as something more important than being a lucrative business opportunity. Being the direct responsibility of the state has additional advantages. Job creation is inherent in tackling climate change. Climate Jobs, however, are also decent jobs. This means Climate Jobs are permanent, relatively well paid, with formal contracts of employment and related benefits. Climate Jobs accordingly invite the large scale insourcing of the outsourced services and jobs that have characterised (partially BEE-driven) public procurement for two decades. The return of Public Works also and equally means a massive reduction in the space open to corruption.

## THE MONEY IS AVAILABLE.

We estimate that one million decent jobs will cost the government R346 billion every year. But the government will get two-thirds of that money back.

- Some of the money will go to producing renewable energy for electricity. Companies and people will pay for that electricity. That will raise about R149 billion a year.
- Some of the money will go for public transport, and people will buy tickets. That will raise about R67 billion a year.
- People who did not have a job will be making money. We estimate the government will get back about R85 billion in taxes.

That leaves R112 billion a year for the government still to find. That's a lot of money. But there are many ways they can find it: increased company taxation, taxing high incomes, taxing bond sales, closing tax haven loopholes and prescribing assets. Changes to

the Unemployment Insurance Fund, pension funds and eliminating corruption are still further options.

Almost all these measures rely on taxing corporations and the elite. It is fair to make the elite and the corporations pay to help solve a problem they have created. When the banks are in trouble, governments find the money, however much it takes. When a country goes to war, they find the money, however much it takes. If the Earth was a bank, or at war, the governments of the world would find the money.

## TWO POSSIBLE CLIMATE FUTURES

Why should South Africans do this alone? We didn't make this problem. Why not wait for the rest of the world to act?

One answer is that there are campaigns and unions in many other countries fighting for Climate Jobs.

The bigger answer is that there are two possible climate futures for South Africa:

In one future, at least a million people leave the countryside for the cities, food production falls, and the country has trouble feeding itself. A crisis in minerals production and export means that there are fewer jobs in the cities. Much larger numbers of people come south from climate devastation affecting the more rural countries to the north. Some of these climate and economic refugees will be stopped at the border, shot or deported. There will be even worse competition for jobs than there is now. Racism against fellow Africans is already common enough. It will grow much stronger. War and famine will become common in the countries to the North.

There is another possible future. In that future, retrenched workers are either provided with government jobs or grants, and subsistence farmers in South Africa receive grants to replace the crops and animals they lose to climate change.

And this will serve as an inspiring example to the rest of Africa and the world. Millions of rural Africans could stay alive and at home. Such a Climate Jobs strategy offers the prospect of taking advantage of technological change to create large numbers of jobs and livelihoods, whilst at the same time combating climate change, which is already causing suffering, especially for poor people, and threatens far greater suffering.

## ONE MILLION CLIMATE JOBS CAMPAIGN

The One Million Climate Jobs campaign is an alliance of unions, environmental organisations, faith and community groups. It was formed in 2011 and remains a core component of the AIDC. Cape Town-based organisations and individuals are welcome to attend monthly Climate Jobs meetings that have been running for almost seven years. The meetings are unique in bringing together academics, researchers, specialist NGOs, trade unions, community groups and the unemployed. [NA](#)

*The Climate Jobs book upon which the above article is based – One Million Climate Jobs: Moving South Africa forward on a low carbon, wage-led and sustainable path – is freely available at <http://aidc.org.za/download/climate-change/OMCJ-booklet-AIDC-electronic-version.pdf>. Hard copies of this booklet are available on request from [info@aidc.org.za](mailto:info@aidc.org.za)*

*AIDC will soon be launching a cartoon version of this booklet.*

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