



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR RESEARCH

Carbon Markets and Worker Rights

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The potential implications of carbon markets, including carbon credits and carbon offsets, on worker rights and labor movements are vast, yet little analysis has been done to fully understand these implications and potential unintended consequences. While the human rights implications of carbon markets have started to receive more attention—focusing especially on the rights of Indigenous communities affected by reforestation and forest conservation projects—a labor rights analysis is often missing. Carbon market deals have the potential to undermine just transition, erode worker rights, proliferate subcontracting and informal employment, and exacerbate precarity. Additionally, carbon markets are an opaque and complex system that the labor movement lacks adequate capacity to understand and utilize proactively. There may be opportunities to shape carbon credit projects in a useful way for workers and the labor movement, but to do so requires robust analysis.

2. AUDIENCE AND USE

This research is an exploratory project for the Solidarity Center and will be used by the SC Climate and Labor Justice team to determine potential union and labor-oriented strategies in the context of the growing impact of carbon markets on workers' lives. The intended research will include a general mapping of the range of carbon market-style initiatives that could impact workers and unions, as well as a targeted labor and worker rights analysis that currently does not exist comprehensively elsewhere.

The SC Climate and Labor Justice team will use this research to:

- 1) Determine how future programs could support unions to develop their own responses to carbon projects that impact them at the local and national levels, as well as contribute to a globally coordinated labor position on a growing trend that affects workers and worker rights worldwide; and
- 2) Analyze the extent to which carbon market and offset/crediting initiatives could be improved to add significant environmental value as well as contribute substantially to expanding access to decent work and building climate resilience for impacted workers and their communities.

The intention of this research will be to not only support the Solidarity Center in its programming and strategy, but also to contribute to the global labor movement's tools and resources for engaging with this growing type of climate initiative. The research is not intended to result in an endorsement or rejection of carbon market practices, but to understand their implications and inform union strategies in response.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objectives of this research are to outline the main implications of carbon markets and related initiatives to workers and labor unions, and to begin to identify opportunities and ways forward for labor



unions and the global labor movement in this as of yet unfamiliar field of climate policy. This research is an attempt to address a gap in knowledge for unions and the global labor movement, as well as a contribution to a resource shortage as union climate policy officers rarely have bandwidth to engage in this topic until it is too late.

This research operates on the theory of change that drives the Solidarity Center’s work on climate and labor justice and worker rights in general—workers and unions can drive positive change for their own lives and in their communities and for fairness and justice in the global economy if they have the knowledge and tools to effectively organize and advocate. Unions are engaging increasingly effectively in just transition climate policy advocacy as well as joining in coalition with community and environmental groups for climate justice in their communities, however have not yet been able to develop a proactive strategy or vision regarding carbon markets, which is a missed opportunity. The SC envisions that a comprehensive mapping of carbon markets and a labor-focused analysis will enable unions to engage in strategy that secures worker rights in this proliferating arena of climate policy.

The research scope includes:

- General mapping and overview of types of carbon markets and offsets, including national, bilateral and multilateral deals as well as privately and publicly-funded initiatives
- Labor analysis of types of carbon credits and carbon schemes, including implication for labor rights, working conditions, and jobs
- Labor case studies of illustrative selected carbon offset projects in program countries, with a particular focus on Africa, the Americas, and Asia

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do carbon markets and related schemes impact workers and their communities?
 - 1.1 In terms of labor justice, what is the difference between the range of carbon market activities (initiatives, schemes, market structures, and offset projects, etc.)?
2. What are the main issues that carbon projects present to workers (including working conditions, worker rights violations, community damage, etc.?)
3. What, if any, are opportunities that these types of projects/initiatives bring for unions and labor movement strategy?

5. RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach will be primarily qualitative and based on desk research and the researcher’s own expert analysis.

Analysis for labor and labor rights implications should include a brief literature review of any existing analyses, including the November 2024 ILO brief “Carbon markets and their implications for a just



transition for all” and an original labor analysis drawing on social, economic, legal, and policy analysis. Case studies can include illustrative stories and testimonials.

If determined to be necessary, select interviews may be included in the methodology. For any interviews, including for the case studies or for the mapping or analysis, it is required that the researcher discusses the list of desired interlocutors with the SC team before conducting any outreach.

6. DELIVERABLES, AND MANAGEMENT

Report: The main deliverable will be a report which will include a mapping section, analysis, case studies, and recommendations for the Solidarity Center, unions and labor partners. The organizational format for the presentation of findings, conclusions, recommendations etc. is at the discretion of the researcher, but it is requested that the report be written in a style that is simple and accessible.

Depending on the findings, the report in whole, or in parts, may be published by the Solidarity Center, or may remain an internal document.

Webinar: Depending on the research results, the researcher may be invited to share findings with partners and allies in a webinar.

7. TIMEFRAME

The research is expected to be completed by April 1, 2025. The researcher will be required to provide and confirm a detailed work plan during the initial phase. The main activities are as follows. The specific dates will be provided to the consultant once one has been selected.

Tasks	Responsibility
Selection and award of contract to selected applicant (researcher)	Solidarity Center
Initial meeting to discuss work plan and goals	SC/Researcher
Submission of detailed work plan and outline draft	Researcher
Final approved work plan and outline	SC/Researcher
Weekly coordination check-in during research to discuss progress, obstacles, and support needed (email or call)	SC/Researcher



Draft Report submitted*	Researcher
Final Report submitted	Researcher

*The first draft of the report will be submitted to the Solidarity Center Climate and Labor Justice team and other relevant SC staff for comment. Comments will be incorporated into the final report, as appropriate. The researcher will provide a response to the Solidarity Center as to why any comments might not have been incorporated. While the substantive content of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report shall be determined by the researcher, the report is subject to final approval by SC in terms of whether or not the report meets the conditions of the TOR.

8. RESEARCH MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Researcher is responsible for conducting the research according to the terms of reference (TOR). The researcher will:

- Review the TOR and provide input, as necessary
- Develop and implement a work plan detailing the research methods (i.e. review literature and records; a proposed list of interviews if any)
- Conduct research
- Provide regular formal and informal reporting to the Solidarity Center during regular check-ins
- Prepare an initial draft of the research report
- Produce deliverables (mainly a report), in accordance with the Scope of Work and contractual arrangements.
- Present research findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the project team, partners, and other stakeholders as relevant.

The Solidarity Center Climate and Labor Justice team is responsible for:

- Providing the researcher with relevant technical guidance and support
- Approving the proposed work plan and outline, including methodology, prior to the start of the research
- Providing access to relevant background materials and facilitating access to stakeholders where relevant
- Reviewing and commenting on drafts of the work plan, outline, and report, among other deliverables
- Reviewing and approving a list of recommended interviewees and contacts, if applicable
- Participating in regular research check ins and providing guidance
- Reviewing and providing comments on the draft research report

9. QUALIFICATION, APPLICATION, AND SELECTION

1. *Qualification of Researcher*



The SC is seeking a researcher with experience analyzing climate policy and/or labor rights, particularly with an international scope. The researcher should have excellent written communication skills in English and all key deliverables must be provided in English. Should the researcher require the assistance of an interpreter or translator for any language other than English, the SC will cover such expenses as mutually agreed upon. Previous experience at the intersection of climate policy and labor rights, demonstrated knowledge about carbon markets, and experience conducting strategic and/or action-oriented research are considered highly desirable.

2. Application Process and Selection Criteria

Selection of the researcher will be based on the strength of the qualifications provided by potential candidates through their expressions of interest for the assignment. The application should include:

- Resume and a cover letter stating the qualifications to conduct the research as described above;
- A proposal of approach and research methods to be used
- Two relevant research samples;
- Fixed price per deliverable based on the deliverables listed in the “Expected Deliverables” section;
- Names and contacts (telephone and e-mail addresses) of three professional references familiar with your qualifications and work experience; and
- Statement of availability for the assignment.

Please send all applications to: Sonia Mistry smistry@solidaritycenter.org by December 13, 2024.

Applications should be submitted as soon as possible and will be reviewed on a rolling basis; please note that target start date for candidate selection is January 6, 2025.