

# From community harm to courtrooms:

## Litigation risks for the renewable energy sector

Renewable energy roll-out is critical to counter the climate crisis. But as the energy transition advances, renewable energy companies must reckon with the possible environmental and human rights impacts associated with their operations for Indigenous Peoples, local communities and workers. Beyond the moral imperative of this focus, the business case for rights-centred operations is increasingly clear. A recent UNDP five-year [analysis](#) of 235 global firms shows that disregarding human rights and environmental risks neither reduces costs nor enhance competitiveness. Instead, there is compelling evidence that strengthening human rights practices delivers clear financial benefits. Failure to address these impacts is increasingly resulting in litigation and project delays, licences challenges and project suspensions – creating material legal, operational, financial and reputational risks for renewable energy companies and investors.

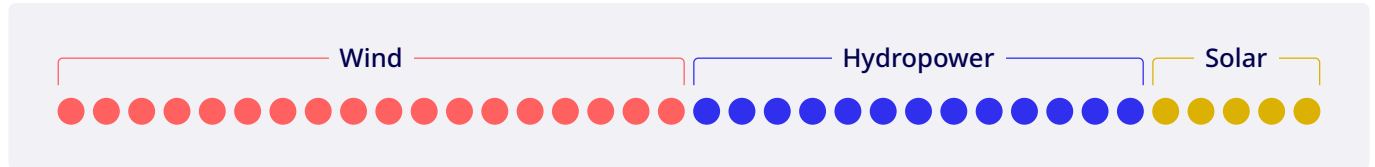
Despite political and financial challenges, renewable energy companies [continue to make steady progress](#) on improving their core human rights policies and practices. Nevertheless, human rights risks remain, with communities increasingly taking to the courts to resist poor practice. Indeed, just transition litigation – lawsuits filed by Indigenous Peoples, affected communities and workers to challenge unfair “[distribution of benefits and burdens](#)” associated with the energy transition through human rights arguments – is on the rise, including lawsuits targeting the renewable energy sector.

For renewable energy companies and their investors, a rights-based approach anchored in [shared prosperity, fair negotiations, and a duty of care for the human and environmental rights](#) of those directly impacted by the energy transition can mitigate these risks.

Our [Just Transition Litigation Tracking Tool](#) now features 125 global cases, including 36 related to companies developing and/or states authorising renewable energy projects (solar, wind and hydropower).

# Key findings based on 36 lawsuits

- Wind farms are targeted in most cases (18 cases), followed by hydropower projects (13) and solar developments (5).



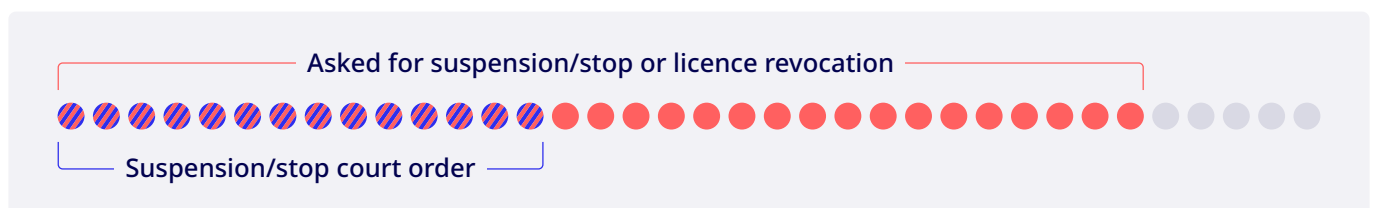
- Rights holders allege harm to their **right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment** (26 cases) and **notable or protected areas** (24). In over half of the cases tracked globally (20), their **livelihoods** were also impacted by the projects, as were **Indigenous Peoples' rights** (17).



- The highest number of lawsuits was filed in **Latin America** (11) and in **Europe and Central Asia** (11).



- In over 85% (31) of lawsuits linked to renewable energy developments, the rightsholders asked for the project to be temporarily or permanently stopped or the licence to be revoked. **In nearly half (14) of these cases, the court ordered the suspension or stopped the project.**



# What business and investors in the renewable energy sector should do to mitigate legal risks

- **Conduct robust human rights and environmental due diligence** along the full value chain, paying particular attention to access to remedy by establishing effective operational-level grievance mechanisms for people directly impacted negatively by the project in the first place.
- **Commit to a corporate duty of care** for human rights and environmental due diligence beyond absent or insufficient national regulations.
- **Adopt and implement a responsible mineral sourcing policy** and engage with upstream suppliers to identify and address human rights risks in transition mineral supply chains.
- **Engage in good-faith consultation with all affected rights holders** before, during, and after operations, including through full adherence to free, prior and informed consent for Indigenous Peoples regardless of legal requirements.
- **Adopt and implement a company-wide policy commitment** to respect human rights defenders, to not tolerate or contribute to attacks and to work with defenders to create safe and enabling environments for engagement.
- **Design and implement projects with a benefit-sharing approach**, including through new models of co-management, ownership and cooperation, and that meaningfully include and empower Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, workers and unions. A clear commitment to shared prosperity can help build trust, strengthen community support and lower the risk of social conflict.



 [Explore the data and read the full 2026 analysis](#)

 [Full methodology](#)

 [Renewable energy and human rights benchmark 2025](#)