



GOVERNMENTS BRIEF

THE **HIDDEN** BILL OF GREEN CONFLICT

De-risking renewable deployment by building enabling environments for community trust

This brief forms part of a series of actor-specific briefs by the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) report on the Hidden Bill of Green Conflict, which examines how community opposition to renewable energy projects can translate into material financial, operational, and societal costs.

Why national and local authorities should care

Governments around the world are racing to expand renewable energy systems in order to meet 2030 interim targets and 2050 net-zero commitments. However, the speed and scale of this transition increasingly depend not only on clean energy technology and financing, but also on community trust.

When community concerns are not addressed early, tensions can escalate into project delays, cancellations, litigation, or operational disruption.

At scale, these conflicts can become a system-level obstacle to national renewable deployment, affecting:

- **Renewable deployment timelines:** Projects may miss construction milestones, grid connection targets, or auction delivery deadlines when tensions delay permitting, land access, or construction activities.
- **Investment climate:** Regions perceived as having high levels of social conflict can experience reduced investor confidence, higher financing costs, or lower participation in renewable auctions.
- **Policy credibility and public support:** High-profile conflicts can generate broader opposition to renewable projects, particularly when communities perceive that projects are imposed without meaningful participation.
- **Justice and equity outcomes:** Communities increasingly evaluate renewable projects not only by their climate benefits but also by the equity, transparency, and participation they generate locally.

Where communities feel excluded from decision-making or benefit-sharing, opposition can intensify and undermine the legitimacy of national transition policies.

How policy frameworks shape community conflict

In some cases, government policy frameworks themselves can unintentionally contribute to conflict dynamics.

For example, tensions may intensify when governments:

- compress consultation timelines to meet deployment targets
- design tenders without clear social safeguards
- provide limited social baseline data to project developers
- weaken oversight or mediation mechanisms
- place responsibility for community engagement entirely on project developers.

The challenge for governments is therefore not to eliminate conflict entirely. Some degree of tension is inevitable when major infrastructure projects intersect with land use, livelihoods, and local development priorities.

Instead, the key question is how governments design policy environments that enable conflicts to be managed constructively rather than escalating into costly disruptions.

In other words, policy design can either prevent conflict early or amplify it later in the project lifecycle.

What Governments Can Do

Community conflict typically develops along a continuum, from early tensions and grievances to litigation or operational disruption. Effective governance frameworks can help address concerns early and prevent escalation.

Governments can play a critical role in shaping the policy frameworks that influence how renewable projects interact with communities. This includes multiple government departments involved in establishing an effective enabling environment for responsible renewables, including not only the national energy authority but also environment, forestry, and agriculture - amongst others - alongside their local authority counterparts.

Integrate social considerations into energy planning:

- Incorporate human rights-based land planning and cumulative social impact assessments into renewable energy strategies, zoning frameworks, and permitting systems.

Strengthen tender and auction design:

- Ensure that renewable tenders include minimum social safeguards and community engagement requirements as qualification criteria, not optional add-ons.
- Require social assessments alongside environmental impact studies for large renewable projects.

Improve social baseline information:

- Provide bidders with reliable social baseline data and community mapping as part of auction documentation.
- This enables developers to anticipate potential tensions and design engagement strategies early.

Increase transparency and access to information:

- Develop public information portals that explain consultation procedures, land access rules, grievance mechanisms, and FPIC processes where applicable.
- Accessible information helps communities understand how decisions are made and how they can participate.

Strengthen mediation and dispute resolution mechanisms:

- Establish credible state-led mediation and dispute resolution systems that allow tensions to be addressed before they escalate into litigation or operational disruption.

Build institutional capacity in renewable hotspots:

- Invest in training and resources for local authorities responsible for renewable permitting, land planning, and community engagement.
- Local government institutions are often the first point of contact for community concerns.

What can governments track?

Governments can improve policy effectiveness by monitoring indicators that signal emerging tensions within renewable deployment pipelines.

Deployment and pipeline health:

- Number of renewable projects delayed due to community-related issues.
- Number of permits paused or reopened following consultations or community pressure.
- Number of project cancellations linked to community opposition.
- Number of litigation cases related to renewable project disputes.

Processes and quality:

- Percentage of bids that include full social assessments in renewable tenders.
- Due diligence screening of developers' past community engagement and conflict histories.
- Mapping of geographic "conflict hotspots" where legacy disputes may affect renewable deployment.

Questions governments should ask

- How do auction timelines and permitting rules influence the quality of community engagement?
- Are renewable tenders providing developers with sufficient social baseline information and community mapping?
- Do communities have accessible and trusted channels to obtain information, participate in consultations, and raise grievances?
- Do government institutions have credible mediation mechanisms that can prevent conflicts from escalating?
- How are we encouraging effective community engagement and conflict resolution practices among developers?
- Do local government authorities have the capacity to manage renewable planning and community tensions effectively?

To learn more about the Hidden Bill of Green Conflict visit www.ihrb.org/resources/the-hidden-bill-of-green-conflict



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