

## Towards Ethical Global Gas Flaring Policy

### The challenge

Global gas flaring harms human and non-human health and well-being while contributing to climate change. The seven countries with the highest shares of gas flaring currently produce 40% of annual global oil and gas and account for 65% of total global flaring. The top nine flaring countries continue to be responsible for most of the flaring.

Global gas flaring activity in the global oil and gas sector is a significant matter of energy justice – concerning the distribution of risks, benefits and harms, recognition of rights, and decision-making influence - within gas-flaring-affected communities. Furthermore, gas flaring concerns global externalities from associated greenhouse gas emissions, including local and global environmental injustices. The absence of a fair and equitable benefit-sharing mechanism, poor governance, and inadequate information hinder mitigation efforts. While gas flaring issues have led to several injustices, various perspectives on gas flaring and energy justice need to be considered to develop equitable policies and regulations. Understanding stakeholder perspectives, including fairness, rights, well-being, and community involvement in decision-making, is crucial for developing fair policies and regulations to address the impacts on affected communities.

### Research aim

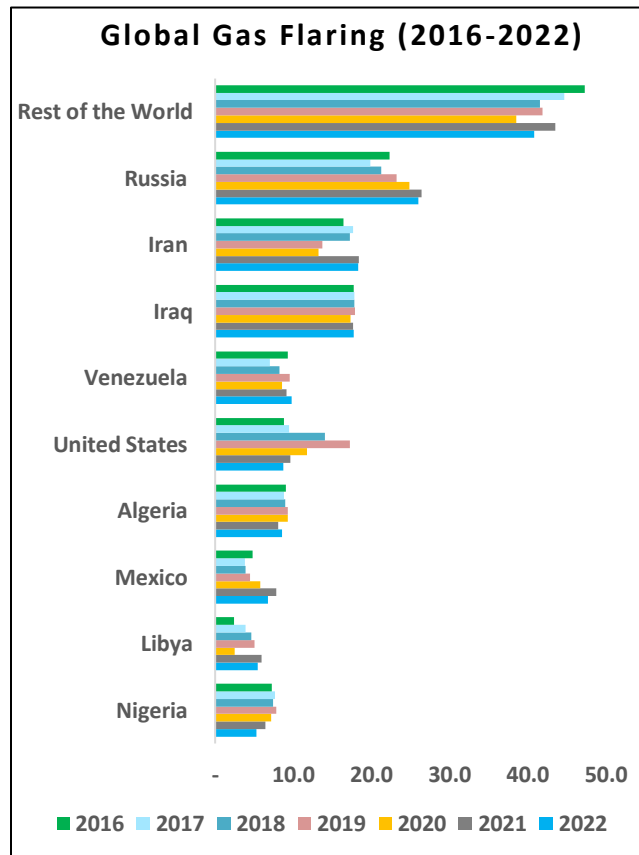
This research aimed to analyse the emergent perspectives on energy justice and global gas flaring and evaluate how agreement and disagreement among these views contribute to developing equitable and inclusive gas flaring policies and regulations.

### Research Questions

- i. What are the emergent perspectives on energy justice and global gas flaring governance?
- ii. How can consensus and conflict between competing perspectives help to inform fair and inclusive gas flaring policies?

### Methods

Data were collected through a Q-methodology survey and exit interviews, semi-structured interviews with seven experts, consisting of four representatives from environmental NGOs and advocacy groups, as well as three environmental campaigners, expert surveys (23 experts out of the 59 contacted responded and completed the survey via email), and document analysis.



**Global gas flaring: Top nine countries with high gas flaring and the rest of the world in billion cubic metres (Bcm) from 2016 to 2022. Data source: The Energy Institute (2023).**

## Key findings

- There is strong stakeholder support for a government-driven ban on gas flaring grounded in cosmopolitan, procedural, and distributive justice considerations.
- Coordinated governance and dispersion of authority from international-national-local regulatory authorities is desired to protect marginalised communities aimed to address the issue of gas-flaring injustice
- Equal rights-based approaches are prioritised over economic benefits in planning for oil and gas extraction focused on the responsibility of businesses and governments to operate in a socially acceptable manner in the oil and gas sector, which can be achieved by industry- and government-led energy justice solutions that emphasise accountability, transparency, and good practice.
- Business responsibility necessitates transparent communication of flaring activities and impacts and the Polluter Pays Principle of environmental redress to affected communities.
- There was consensus around distributive, procedural, and recognition normative positions, support/non-support for zero-flaring, and a desire for greater transparency of information provided to the public as a matter of procedural justice. However, stakeholder disagreement centred upon the practical mechanisms to achieve just outcomes - including compensation, the role of local authorities, regulatory agencies, Environmental Impact Assessment, and efforts to tackle rent-seeking and corruption.

## Policy recommendations

1. Governments of countries that flare gas and International Oil Companies must discourage enclave development by promoting local resources, supply chains, and labour or share more benefits with host communities.
2. Since gas flaring often takes place in sacrifice zones – places populated by economically and politically vulnerable communities, in which collective benefits to the economy are produced at the expense of the local environment and the community it supports, governments should carefully manage gas flaring pollution in sacrifice zones.
3. Improve transparency by implementing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).
4. Governments must require International Oil Companies to conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and take the findings into account before approving new developments.

### This policy brief is based on a paper published as follows:

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*Policymakers and governments of gas flaring nations could use the research findings to inform the development of policies and regulations to reduce the environmental and social impacts of gas flaring and improve environmental justice outcomes for flaring-affected communities. Our findings contribute towards understanding the context-sensitivity of distributive, procedural, recognition, and cosmopolitan justice principles to gas flaring governance and how global gas flaring justice issues affect people at various scales.*