



Youth Concern on Environment
and Development

MONTHLY UPDATES ON YCED'S CEET PROJECT



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As we continue to drive innovation and impact across grassroots communities in relation to a just and equitable energy transition, we're excited to share the latest milestones and opportunities shaping our collective journey towards a more sustainable, livable and resilient communities in Uganda. From strong community partnerships to forward-looking insights, this edition highlights the momentum building around the communities where we work and beyond.

For more than three decades, the world has recognized the need for multilateral climate commitments. The impacts of climate change are global, and no country can overcome the crisis alone. In 1992, nations agreed to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the mechanism to limit global warming and deal with unavoidable impacts. Three years later, countries started negotiations to strengthen the UNFCCC which led to the Kyoto Protocol with top-down, legally binding commitments for developed countries to reduce emissions and counter climate impacts.

In 2015, the Paris Agreement came into effect, building on the foundation these existing climate treaties created. It incorporated a global goal to cut emissions to levels that would limit warming to between 1.5C and 2C. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement requires all countries to take emissions reduction measures but does so in a 'bottom up' manner, leaving it to countries to decide their own emissions reduction targets.

The UNFCCC and Paris Agreement have been signed on to by 198 and 195 country parties respectively, making them two of the most highly subscribed international treaties with near-universal participation. This is significant, as it sets common and transparent baselines for action. Both treaties also recognize the challenges with a just transition for fossil fuel dependent countries which is critical.

At the same time, the high level of ambition needed to drive climate action on a scale commensurate with the problem has not been achieved due to the UNFCCC consensus process which allows fossil fuel producing nations to stall action and water down commitments. This big tent approach means there are more fossil fuel lobbyists participating in UNFCCC negotiations than delegates from the ten most climate vulnerable countries combined.

This sheds light on why the Paris Agreement does not mention fossil fuels nor does it include the words oil, gas and coal. It does not include a mechanism for negotiating an equitable phase out and transition to low-carbon renewable energy from wind, sun, water and other sources. At COP28 in Dubai, for the first time countries agreed there is a need to transition away from fossil fuels, yet the decision text does not address the manner and timeline for doing so. Meanwhile, countries have plans to increase oil, gas and coal extraction to levels that would result in 110 percent more emissions than the amount that would limit warming to 1.5C. The lack of a legal framework to phase them out is making the goals of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement vastly out of reach given carbon emissions from fossil fuels are responsible for more than 85 percent of the warming problem.

Shaping a community-driven Energy transition. The pathway out of climate hell is paved by renewables.

During our community engagements geared towards understanding community perspectives on energy transition, We found out that there's still a lot to do in engaging grassroot communities to create a mindset change around renewables

A fast transition to a fully renewable energy system hinges on meaningful community engagement and ensuring fair benefits from renewables for local host communities. Engaging with communities when developing clean energy projects in their local vicinity is crucial.

Putting grassroot communities at the Centre of all clean energy transitions not only improves people's lives but is also key to successfully implementing energy and climate policies. Local energy communities, or community-based energy projects, are showing clear benefits across the globe in deploying renewable technologies, improving efficiency, supporting reliable power supply, reducing bills, and generating local jobs. At the same time, these initiatives are garnering increased attention as effective vehicles towards more inclusive, equitable and resilient energy systems.

Over 90% of cooking fuel in Uganda is obtained from biomass energy, majorly firewood and charcoal. This consumption rate worries sustainable initiatives, coupled with health challenges arising from indoor air pollution and continuous exposure to smoke.

Through this initiative, we aim to create awareness, clear misconceptions, and showcase the benefits of clean cooking through tailored messages and community engagement, contributing to the National Development Plan IV target of increasing clean energy use for cooking from the current 25% to 50% by 2030

YCED has decided to choose a different path with a different approach that prioritizes local energy communities to help them realize and harness that potential because it's quite clear that community acceptability of these green growth initiatives is very key.



Figure 2: Women group trained in making briquettes as an alternative to charcoal.



Figure 3: A group of women conservationists in Mityana district are supplying briquettes at a discounted price.

A community Perspective on Energy Transition; Empowering grassroot communities through mind-set change.

Uganda is blessed with green energy transition alternatives. With a current energy consumption mix Uganda heavily relies on biomass, hydroelectricity and fossil fuels (diesel and petrol) which contribute to deforestation and thus greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Biomass contributes over 90% in the form of firewood, charcoal and crop residues and on an annual basis, the country loses 120,000 hectares of forest cover annually. Evidently, this unprecedented rate of forest cover loss has caused a negative bearing on the country's ability to mitigate climate change continuing to underpin very low universal access to energy in Uganda.

Therefore, YCED argues that a just transition to solar, wind and renewable forms of energy will help achieve the goal of universal access. With this goal, Uganda plans to transition to solar and wind energy, build mini-grids and promote renewable solutions aligning with its NDPIV, vision 2040, inter alia.

The over ambitious Uganda Energy Transition plan launched at COP28 in Dubai has to be brought to reality, the plan looks at Uganda achieving net-zero by 2065. This means that by 2030, Uganda needs 8Billions USD in annual clean energy investment, 20,000 additional jobs, 800,000 households to gain electricity connection each year, one million clean cooking stoves annually, improving energy access and expanding clean energy capacity with electricity generation growth at 14% per year.



Figure 4: Continuous community engagement on energy transition has proved to challenge the status quo.

The challenges and inequalities that mark grassroots community energy landscape include.

- 1) Very low electricity coverage throughout the country especially in rural areas
- 2) Limited access to efficient and modern energy services among the rural population due to lack of appropriate mechanisms
- 3) Low involvement and lack of full participation of all stakeholders (civil society organizations, international development partners, local government structures, the media and local people) in the transition process
- 4) Power dynamics of different stakeholders are not considered
- 5) Mindset change on clean energy alternatives, A community leader said, "Banana cooked on gas cylinder doesn't taste the same as the one cooked on charcoal and firewood". another community member Ms Nankya janepher said "we don't have enough capacity to operate a gas cylinder, and that times such gas cylinders are deadly"

Recommendations.

To bring Uganda's energy transition plan into reality, YCED clearly recommends the following,

- 1) We need to clearly articulate a set of Just Transition Principles that define what a just transition means in the Ugandan context and provide guidance on the kinds of issues that need to be considered when planning and implementing fair structural changes. These principles are essentially focused on (i) fairly managing the ways risks, costs and burdens are distributed; (ii) involving affected stakeholders in transition planning; and (iii) using transitions as an opportunity to tackle broader economic and social inequality.
- 2) Provide a practical step-by-step approach for practitioners to apply the just transition principles. This involves an initial screening of envisaged transitions and identifying social welfare risks and those likely to be affected, conducting detailed assessments to quantify risks and understand how they may be distributed, and forming partnerships within and beyond government that are able to identify and implement targeted support measures for significantly affected stakeholders.
- 3) Outlines how the just transition objectives and interventions will be integrated into Uganda's existing planning and budgeting processes, assigning clear responsibilities to certain agencies to consider potential welfare risks as part of planning and budgeting decisions.
- 4) The meaning of "just transition" is not always obvious to different stakeholders. It is often mistakenly assumed as synonymous with a "low-carbon transition" or "green economy transition", when in fact it is about ensuring that when these transitions take place, they result in fair outcomes for everyone. It is important to work closely with different stakeholders to explore the impacts of transitions and to define what "just" outcomes would look like in the local context.

5) We need the engagement of a diverse range of stakeholders in the just transition planning process, this will contribute to increasing interest in the topic, including within sector groups. Since participating in these discussions to develop Uganda's National Just Transition Frameworks, representatives from the transport sector, including from the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union, have begun developing their own just transition framework.

6) Uganda needs to start drawing concrete examples and lessons from other African countries in deepening understanding the purpose and potential impact just transition frameworks. Participants' direct engagement with stakeholders from other countries will help crystallize the importance of just transitions and the practical utility of planning them.

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