**Learning and Exchange Forum Blogpost on**

**Operationalising Just Transition in Africa (OJTA): Assessing African Countries’ NDC Priorities, Progress, and Implementation Gaps in Relation to Renewable Energy Access**

*By Akinyi J. EURALLYAH, Carine ADJASSA and Diana MUTHUSI*

**Introduction**

The energy sector is crucial to the overall development of the world, particularly in Africa. However, it is also the sector that contributes the most to climate change due to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. It is therefore imperative to identify suitable solutions that can reconcile the development of this sector with the reduction of its CO₂ emissions.

With this in mind, the "Operationalizing a Just Transition in Africa" (OJTA) research project, funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in collaboration with the Africa Research Impact Network, the Centre for the Advancement of Scholarship at the University of Pretoria and SouthSouthNorth, hosted a learning and exchange forum on the theme: "**Operationalising Just Transition in Africa: Assessing priorities, progress and gaps in the implementation of African countries' NDCs for renewable energy access.**" This forum was held virtually on June 28, 2024.

The aim of this learning and exchange forum was to integrate Just Transition principles into Africa's climate commitments and energy initiatives. It also created a platform for sharing ideas on implementing just energy transitions, given the unique challenges facing Africa. The forum focused on using research to inform practical policies, helping policymakers to address key energy transition issues.

The just transition is faced with so many challenges especially in the African continent. The landscape analysis implemented during the first phase of the OJTA project provided an initial understanding of the just transition agenda in Africa, focusing on research, policy, and capacity building. The Landscape analysis evaluated the current policies and frameworks guiding just transitions, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs),examined how financial institutions are considered in just transition policies and the role of Multilateral Development Banks in enabling investments, highlighted how national frameworks for just transitions incorporate funding from national financial institutions and development finance institutions analysis of Analysis of the financial landscape for just energy transition in Kenya and South Africa to determine the feasibility of implementation, reviewed capacity-building initiatives in Kenya and South Africa supporting just energy transitions and provided a set of policy recommendations aimed at ensuring a just energy transition.

**Kenya’s NDC Policy Landscape and Implementation Strategies**

The learning and exchange forum enriched the landscape analysis by focusing on several key discussions such as the renewable energy-related NDC policy landscape Eng. Stephen Nzioka, provided a detailed overview of Kenya's NDC policy landscape and implementation strategies under the [National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) to achieve 100% renewable energy use by 2030](https://www.planning.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/THEMATIC-PLAN-FOR-CLIMATE-CHANGE.pdf).These included; a) Promoting Renewable Energy Sources-The Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation ([REREC](https://www.rerec.co.ke/Strategic%20Plan/REREC%20Strategic%20Plan%202018%202023%20FIN%20b.pdf)) were mentioned as the ones in charge of  spearheading efforts to bring renewable energy to all 47 counties. This includes demonstrating new technologies like bio digesters and developing additional hydropower plants b) Enhancing Electricity Network Expansion-Improving electricity access both on-grid and off-grid by connecting 2.3 million additional customers and 30,000 public facilities. The plan includes installing 90,000 transformers, developing 150 [mini-grids](https://www.esmap.org/sites/default/files/2022/MG%20Kenya%202023/booklet%2025%20feb%20rev.pdf), and 50,743 standalone systems, and reducing electricity transmission and distribution losses from 23% to 16.5%, c)Promoting Clean Cooking Fuels and Technology-Adopting clean cooking through LPG, biogas, and achieving 23% adoption of improved cooking solutions like stoves. The goal is to ensure 5,000 public institutions transition to LPG, d) Catalyzing Geothermal Use and Focusing on climate-proofing energy infrastructure by using 50% concrete or eco-poles for distribution and transmission lines to reduce deforestation.

**NDC Policy Gaps**

On the renewable energy policy gaps, Eng. Maxwell Ngala highlighted several policy gaps and challenges in East and Central Africa's energy sector. Eng. Maxwell Ngala stressed the need to address grid reliability and security while pursuing decarbonization, and called for embracing digitalization for data-driven decision-making and efficiency improvements. He advocated for market democratization through open access regulations to create a more competitive energy landscape, and emphasized the importance of improving financial accessibility, particularly from the private sector. He further emphasized the need for supportive policy frameworks to encourage private sector involvement in clean energy investments, promote energy efficiency, and support systemic transformation focusing on speed, scale, and sustainability. Highlighting the crucial role of collaborative efforts among stakeholders in addressing these gaps to foster sustainable energy development across the region.

**Challenges of Financing Just Energy Transition**

Just Energy Transition Financing by Rueben Wambui proved that there is also limited funding to implement just transition policy actions and plans – Rueben Wambui, from his presentation identified five main barriers: High levels of public debt, inadequate climate action funding, High-risk perception in African markets, Currency fluctuations, Limited private sector involvement. He pointed out that based on the current Financing Landscape:65% of climate finance in Africa comes from grants Only 14% comes from private investments, compared to 36% in Southeast Asia hence a significant gap between [NDC](https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/landscape-of-climate-finance-in-africa/) needs and actual capital flows. Reuben advocated for the need for de-risking mechanisms, such as guarantees and credit enhancements, to attract private investments. Additionally, innovative financing mechanisms, including credit guarantees, first loss guarantees, FX guarantees, and project preparation facilities, are crucial in addressing the financing challenges. He emphasized the role of public and DFI finances in providing de-risking mechanisms to facilitate the flow of private capital into the energy sector and support the just transition necessary to meet climate goals.

**ARIN NDC Financing Fellowship**

Michael Konig discussed capacity building in the context of the NDC Financing Fellowship program that led to the establishment of a Climate Finance and Sustainability Center in Uganda, in cooperation with local institutions like Makerere University Business School in Kampala. This centre aims to build local capacities and also the fellowship program resulted in a series of case studies focusing on practical aspects of renewable energy finance, particularly public-private partnerships (PPPs). These studies helped build capacity by examining how to finance NDCs and identifying alignment issues between NDCs and PPP priorities.

After the panel discussion, there was a presentation of blogs that had been submitted by various authors on various thematic focuses.

**Blog Presentations**

As highlighted in the landscape analysis the absence of comprehensive and current data poses a hindrance to effective decision-making in the realm of energy transitions**.** Humphrey Agevi'sblog on’ ’Data Availability is Crucial for Enhanced planning and implementation of the Just Transition Policy and Financing Plans,’’ emphasized that reliable and comprehensive data is essential for African countries to balance development needs with climate goals while ensuring social and economic equity. Key benefits of robust data mentioned included enabling evidence-based policymaking, designing targeted interventions, facilitating effective monitoring and evaluation, encouraging stakeholder participation, strengthening cases for climate finance, and ensuring value for money in energy projects.

Challenges associated with the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs in Africa were discussed by various authors: Jim Oduour, Onyekachi Nwafor and Jerry Ariel.

Onyekachi Nwafor’s blog on, “Operationalizing a Just Transition in Nigeria: Assessing NDC Priorities and Renewable Energy Access Implementation Gaps.’’ pointed out that Nigeria's efforts to significantly increase renewable energy's share in its energy mix, focusing on off-grid solar solutions to enhance nationwide energy access and align with SDGs are exposed to  challenges like inadequate infrastructure, financing barriers, regulatory inconsistencies, and technical skills shortages hinder implementation. To address these gaps, he recommended that Nigeria should prioritize infrastructure development, innovative financing approaches, policy streamlining, capacity building, community engagement, and regional collaboration. Learning from successful models across Africa to help Nigeria advance its renewable energy agenda and contribute effectively to global climate change mitigation efforts.

Jim Oduor discussed the, “Challenges associated with the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs in Africa. “He highlighted critical barriers across Africa hindering the implementation of renewable energy-related NDCs. These include heavy dependence on natural resources, insufficient long-term strategies, financial and technical barriers limiting the uptake of renewable and off-grid energy solutions, economic diversification challenges, and inadequate policy frameworks and institutional capacity. To overcome these, he proposed comprehensive strategies that integrate adaptation into development planning, prioritize renewable energy investments, enhance local technological capabilities, promote green job creation, and establish supportive legal and regulatory frameworks to encourage private sector participation in sustainable energy development.

Jerry Ariel's “Bridging the Gap for a Just Transition” emphasized significant challenges in Africa's transition to renewable energy, such as limited financial resources, policy inconsistencies, and data inadequacies. To foster private sector participation, he advocated for clear and consistent policies, renewable energy targets, robust regulatory frameworks, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and market-based incentives like renewable energy auctions and carbon pricing schemes. Collaboration, private sector engagement, capacity building, community involvement, and innovation were identified as crucial elements for ensuring equitable distribution of renewable energy benefits and building resilient, prosperous communities.

Collaboration is essential for creating a successful and sustainable renewable energy future. Working together, different stakeholders can ensure projects are not only good for the environment but also socially responsible and meet the needs of local communities. The article by Emmanuel Gichuru Muchora highlighted the crucial role foresters and environmental managers play in implementing renewable energy plans outlined in [Nationally Determined Contributions](https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/all-about-ndcs#:~:text=Simply%20put%2C%20an%20NDC%2C%20or,update%20it%20every%20five%20years.) (NDCs). Foresters are highlighted for their expertise in carbon sequestration, sustainable biomass production, and safeguarding biodiversity all essential for mitigating climate change impacts. Environmental managers, on the other hand, are crucial for conducting Environmental Impact Assessments ([EIAs](https://www.nema.go.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=119&Itemid=144#:~:text=Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment%20(EIA)%20is,their%20property%20and%20the%20environment.)), managing natural resources sustainably, and shaping policy frameworks that support environmental sustainability in renewable energy projects.

Emily Bolo's article "Flame-Free Future: Harnessing Clean Cooking for Optimal Energy Efficiency in Africa" showcased the urgent need to address energy poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) by promoting clean cooking technologies and enhancing energy efficiency. The blog emphasized the necessity of clean cooking for health, environment, and human dignity, with an annual cost of inaction estimated at $330 billion. In addition, the blog noted the importance of energy efficiency, particularly in cooking, for sustainability and improved livelihoods. It called for collaborative efforts among governments, private sectors, and communities to advance clean cooking technologies and achieve energy efficiency goals set during COP28. She highlights the need for comprehensive policies, regulatory frameworks, and systemic programs to ensure sustainable energy solutions across Africa.

Emily Bolo and Lavender Ochieng’s blog on,’’Scaling Renewable-Based Clean Cooking Options in Sondu, Kenya’ ’focused on scaling renewable-based clean cooking options in Sondu.In November 2023, more than 50 champions in Nyakach were trained on electric pressure cookers (EPCs) to promote clean cooking technologies. Participants showed interest, though concerns about high electricity costs and reliability were raised, highlighting barriers to adoption. The authors stressed the need for tailored adaptation strategies and policy alignment to address climate impacts on local communities, advocating for widespread adoption of energy-efficient appliances through awareness campaigns. Following the training the following were the recommendations, making electric cooking appliances affordable, designing EPCs suitable for African family sizes, reducing electricity costs to incentivize adoption, Support from partners is needed to scale clean cooking initiatives and encouraging women's participation in table banking to facilitate appliance purchases.

Emily Bolo and Benjamin Oduor’s blog on,’’ A Just Transition in Africa: Why E-cooking Matters’’ talked on the critical role of a just transition in Africa, particularly focusing on e-cooking as a significant contributor to sustainable development. They argued that e-cooking aligns with the goals of equitable benefits, economic growth, and environmental protection by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and polluting cooking methods. While acknowledging challenges like infrastructure limitations, financing difficulties, and the need for consumer education, they noted that e-cooking is becoming increasingly feasible due to growing electricity access and support from governments and the private sector. They recommended investing in electricity infrastructure and educating consumers on e-cooking's benefits to accelerate its adoption.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Some recommendations can be made to achieve a just energy transition in Africa.

First, it is crucial to implement inclusive strategies, promote renewable energies, use research to inform policy, strengthen international collaborations, and build local capacity.

**Inclusive participation:**

* Involve local communities, energy sector workers, and civil society representatives in the development of energy transition policies.
* Ensure representation of marginalized and vulnerable groups to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed.

**Training and awareness-raising:**

* Organize training workshops for policymakers and stakeholders on just transition principles.
* Sensitize local communities to the benefits of renewable energies and energy transition.

**Promotion of Renewable Energies:**

* Provide subsidies and tax incentives to encourage the development of mini-grids and solar home systems.
* Collaborate with the private sector to increase investment in renewable energy projects.

**Infrastructure improvement:**

* Invest in the infrastructure needed to support the integration of renewable energies into the national grid.
* Promote research and development of energy technologies adapted to local African conditions.

**Partnerships with academic and research institutions:**

* Encourage collaborations between policymakers and research institutions to ensure that policies are based on solid evidence.
* Fund case studies and research on best practices in just energy transition.

**Public-Private Partnerships:**

* Facilitate partnerships between governments, private companies, and non-governmental organizations to maximize available resources and expertise.
* Share the risks and benefits of energy transition projects between partners.

**Regional and international cooperation:**

* Participate in international forums to exchange knowledge and experience on energy transition.
* Align with global and regional initiatives to benefit from available funding and technical support.

These practical recommendations, based on the priorities and challenges identified during the learning and exchange forum, offer a roadmap for a sustainable and equitable energy future for all Africans.

**© ARIN Press 2024**