OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2024

THE EAST AFRICAN SUSWATCH E-BULLETIN

A *Monthly* from the East African Sustainability Watch Network and INFORSE East Africa

Renewable Energy Civil Society Chairman Appointed to Board of Trustees of the Uganda National Renewable Energy Platform

The Ugandan Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) has appointed Mr. Kimbowa Richard (*in picture above*) who is the Chairman of the Renewable Energy Civil Society Organizations Network, and Chairman of the International Network of Sustainable Development (INFORSE) - East Africa to a seven-member Board of Trustees of the National Renewable Energy Platform (NREP) effective December 1, 2024 to November 30, 2026.

The Board is also responsible for guiding Uganda's renewable energy vision, ensuring the Platform's activities are compatible with its aims, and that the Platform complies with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. Membership to the NREP Board is voluntary, with at least 40 percent women (about three women) representation prioritized. The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for the overall governance, strategic direction and functioning of the NREP as set out in the Operations Manual, Strategic Plan, and these Terms of Reference.

In a letter (dated November 14, 2024), Mr. Godfrey Kimuli - the National Coordinator of the NREP noted that, 'Since its inauguration on November 24, 2021, NREP has been governed by an interim Board of Trustees that has steered it this far, registering remarkable success in a short period of time. As the Platform continues to undergo metamorphosis; it is about time for it to usher in a new Board of Trustees'.

The role of the NREP Board of Trustees is among others to oversee the NREP secretariat by upholding its ethos and values; shaping the NRE strategy; inspiring effective leadership, monitoring NREP overall performance and ensuring accountability to its stakeholders.

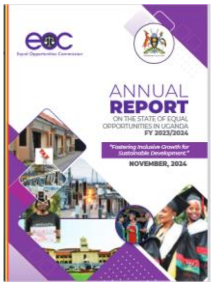
In his acceptance letter, Mr. Kimbowa Richard thanked the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development for recognizing CSO efforts and appreciating their contribution to promoting renewable energy and the NREP. 'As CSOs under RECSO Network, we promise to work with the rest of the actors to further the cause of NREP and the wider advancement of renewables across the country,' he added.

Upon this appointment, Ms. Jacinta Nekesa - Executive Director at Environmental Alert (as host of the RECSO network) observed that, 'This is a very good step forward and an entry point for us as RECSO Network to continue working closely with NREP.' Ms. Carolyne Kirabo - Programme Manager at Environmental Alert noted that, 'It is indeed a good step. With this appointment, the distinction between NREP and RECSO platform, and therefore roles will be clearly understood whilst optimizing the collective action and opportunities the two platforms present'.

Hosted at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD), the National Renewable Energy Platform (NREP) is a key initiative which unifies and coordinates efforts in Uganda's renewable energy sector. By bringing together government agencies, private sector players, development partners, and civil society organizations, NREP ensures that resources, actions, and innovations are aligned to drive sustainable energy solutions in Uganda.

Read more about the work of the National Renewable Energy Platform (NREP) from here: https://nrep.ug/

Uganda's Equal Opportunities Commission's 11th Annual Report Highlights the Gap in Access to Electricity and Solar Energy



On November 6, 2024 the Equal Opportunities Commission launched the 11th Annual Report on the State of Equal Opportunities in Uganda witnessed by the Hon. Betty Among, the Minister for Gender, Labour and Social Development as chief guest at Sheraton Hotel in Kampala. In attendance also were Ministers, Members of Parliament, high-level staff from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Local Governments as well as the Civil Society fraternity.

The Report highlights the state of equal opportunities in Uganda focusing on among others, access to electricity and solar energy.

The Report notes that 94% of the household's cook using firewood and charcoal and only 6% cook using the other sources of energy such electricity, kerosene, and gas. This is way below the planned target of 15% highlighted in the National Development Plan III as well as the desired target of 50% in the Uganda Vision 2040. Hence, households in rural areas utilize other more dangerous forms of energy such as kerosene, charcoal and burning wood, which are extremely harmful to the environment and mainly impact on the livelihood and survival of the vulnerable and marginalized groups

The Report further points out that less than 10% of households in rural communities use grid electricity for lighting compared to 51% of the urban communities. The Report further notes that Karamoja and West Nile sub-region had the least numbers of households connected to national grid at 1% and 1.6% respectively. The Report points out that out of the 13 sub-regions assessed, low coverage was observed in West Nile sub-region with 55% of the total sub-counties not connected to electricity grid. While Karamoja was found to be the least sub-region with access to grid electricity, it was also observed to have the lowest number of households using both solar home systems and solar kits at 11% and 2.5% respectively.

The Report established that there was a wide disparity regarding access to electricity in rural and hard to reach areas (Islands). Within the island located in the six districts of Kalangala, Buikwe, Mukono, Wakiso, and Buvuma, it was observed that only Kalangala District had been connected to power through solar generation system of 1.6 Megawatts.

'Several public facilities like health facilities and education facilities in many hard to reach areas were not connected to both grid and off grid which hinders service delivery, the Report emphatically warns.

In its recommendations, the Equal Opportunities Commission calls upon the Ministry of Energy and Mineral development (MEMD) to ensure that the remaining sub-county headquarters in the different 13 regions bare also connected to the national grid electricity to reduce on the use of dangerous forms of energy. The Commission also equally calls upon the MEMD and the Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited to fast-track electrification of the number of public facilities (health facilities and education facilities) that do not have access to grid electricity to enhance service delivery.

The Commission recommends that Electricity Regulatory Authority (ERA) should review the cost of electricity for domestic use as the current cost is too high to be afforded by the vulnerable and marginalized population which constitutes the highest proportion of the population. In the same way, the Commission urges the ERA to put in place strong monitoring mechanisms to electricity distributors to avoid price exploitation

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is a constitutional body established by the Equal Opportunities Commission Act, No. 2 of 2007 (EOC Act). At both national and local levels the EOC operationalizes Article 32 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (as amended), the Equal Opportunities Commission Act Cap 7 of 2007, and the provisions of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015. It also aligns with the objectives set forth in the National Development Plan III (NDP III) 2020/21- 2024/25, the NRM Manifesto 2021/22 - 2025/26 and Vision 2040, which all emphasize the importance of inclusive growth and equitable resource distribution. The findings contribute to achievement of the SDGs, particularly those related to reducing inequalities and ensuring access to essential services for all.

Read the full 11th EOC Report from here: https://www.eoc.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/11th-ANNUAL-REPORT-ON-THE-STATE-OF-EQUAL-OPPORTUNITIES-IN-UGANDA-FY-2023-2024_compressed.pdf

‘Rowdy’ Carbon Markets After COP29 Climate Talks?

While the 29th Conference of Parties (COP 29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 24, with disappointment on its central agenda — climate finance, carbon markets (under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement) gained momentum described by the host country as a ‘breakthrough as it can save as much as $250 billion per year in implementation of the national climate plans (NDCs)’
Article 6 has three operative paragraphs, two of which relate to carbon markets. Article 6.2 provides an accounting framework for international cooperation, such as linking the emissions-trading schemes of two or more countries. It also allows for the international transfer of carbon credits between countries. Article 6.4 establishes a central UN mechanism to trade credits from emissions reductions generated through specific projects. Article 6.8 establishes a work program for non-market approaches, such as applying taxes to discourage emissions.

According to the World Resources Institute (2019), carbon markets are a big deal, both in terms of potential emissions reductions and the cost savings they can generate. Half of countries’ initial national climate plans (constituting 31% of global emissions) include the use of international cooperation through carbon markets. ‘Countries that struggle to meet their emissions-reduction targets under their NDCs, or want to pursue less expensive emissions cuts, can purchase emissions reductions from other nations that have already cut their emissions more than the amount they had pledged, such as by transitioning to renewable energy. If the rules are structured appropriately, the result can be a win-win for everyone involved — both countries meet their climate commitments, the overachiever is financially rewarded for going above and beyond, finance is provided to the country generating the emissions reductions, and the world gets a step closer to avoiding catastrophic climate change’, the World resources Institute explains.

So, progress in Article 6 negotiations, achieved at COP29, will be crucial for creating functional carbon markets, which are essential for meeting the Paris Agreement´s reduction targets and mobilizing much-needed finance. While the Supervisory Body overseeing Article 6.4 is tasked with ensuring high standards, concerns remain over the potential flooding of markets with low-quality credits from the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism. For example, Trishant Dev - Programme officer for Climate Change at the New Delhi-based think tank - Centre for Science and Environment, points out Article 6.2 shortcomings in the framework saying it is “weak on accountability” and lacks strong enforcement mechanisms for non-compliance. ‘There are no strong consequences for countries in case of inconsistencies flagged by experts, such as misreporting or not following the framework to the spirit. Overall, despite some transparency measures, nothing in the framework prevents Parties from trading low-quality carbon credits,” affirms Trishant.

Carbon Market Watch, an independent carbon pricing watchdog equally notes that the final text on Article 6.2 includes some positive transparency requirements, but significant accountability shortcomings remain. On the one hand, it’s necessary for countries to publish information when they formally approve Internationally Traded Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs), the units used for emissions trading between countries, for use by other actors, such as companies. On the other hand, the information detailing countries’ formal approval of carbon credits, as well as additional information about trade deals, may not come until very late for credits purchased by airlines under the UN’s CORSIA offsetting scheme or companies under the voluntary carbon market. This may not occur possibly years after issuance, and as late as the moment they are actually used.

Also, the Washington – based Centre for International Law (CIEL) flags out three problems with reliance on carbon markets as a source of climate finance. It cautions that ‘given the woeful lack of funding for mitigation, adaptation, or loss and damage, carbon markets appear to many Global South countries and communities as the only source of needed finance. But this is a false choice.’ CIEL further warns that, ‘Leaving countries with no option but to accept carbon markets as finance places the burden of climate action on those who have done the least and are suffering the most and lets polluters in the Global North off the hook for taking the necessary action and providing adequate finance.’ CIEL further asserts that rather than communities at the frontlines benefitting, middlemen who have brokered the projects or project developers, who may not be local people, reap the majority of the benefits. **Read more from Carbon Market Watch: ‘COP29: Complex Article 6 rules pave way to unruly carbon markets’ https://carbonmarketwatch.org/2024/11/23/cop29-complex-article-6-rules-pave-way-to-unruly-carbon-markets/**