

A Monthly from the East African Sustainability Watch Network founded by Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development (UCSD), Tanzania Coalition for Sustainable Development (TCSD) and SusWatch Kenya

‘Decade of Action’ in East Africa: CSOs to Launch a Virtual Catalogue of Local Sustainable Solutions



Environmental problems that are facing East Africa include overgrazing, deforestation, water shortages, loss of biodiversity and urban-industrial pollution. While environmental authorities remain weak, Civil Society in the region lacks adequate resources and know-how to effectively intervene in promoting viable local solutions and influencing change. As men and women are affected differently by these problems, taking a gender perspective into account in environmental policy and practice is equally critical.

It is in an attempt to address the above challenges that the International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE) East Africa members: Sustainable Environmental Development Watch (SusWatch Kenya); Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development, and Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) in Uganda; and the Centre for Sustainable Energy Services in Tanzania (TaTEDO), INFORSE-East Africa c/o TaTEDO) have partnered with INFORSE secretariat and the Nordic Centre for Renewable Energy in Denmark with support from CISU Denmark, are cooperating in a three-year project (2019-2022) in East Africa entitled: *East African Civil Society for Sustainable Energy & Climate Action (EASE & CA)*.

The overall development objective of EASE&CA Project is to provide increased access to sustainable energy and to other climate solutions in local communities in Uganda, in Kenya, and in Tanzania, with the full and effective participation and leadership of both women and men, to improve livelihoods and to reduce poverty. The plan is to combine civil society activities in ways that reinforce each other, through contributing to implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG1) on poverty, SDG5 (gender), SDG7 (clean energy), SDG13 (climate action), and SDG17 (partnerships). As one of its activities, the EASE&CA Project is developing a Catalogue of Local Sustainable Solutions. This seeks to contribute to the UN declared ‘Decade of Action’ - an ambitious global effort to deliver the Agenda 2030 (SDGs) promise through mobilization of actors and calling on all people to make the SDGs their own, to accelerate sustainable solutions to all the world's biggest challenges — ranging from poverty, access to clean forms of energy, gender, climate change, and inequality.

As Mary Swai (TaTEDO) sums it up, ‘The (forthcoming) EASE&CA Catalogue presents local sustainable solutions which are popular in East Africa and are being used by at least more than 1,000 people. The Catalogue will be made available online and in print for ease access to interested actors in the region (and beyond) and will provide details on social and economic benefits of the focus technology, costs for construction, lifespan, problems and limitations, motivation for success, contribution to climate effect, financing models, business models and short video on construction and how it works’. Cases from the Catalogue with examples of the ‘most significant change’ including those from CSOs, will be used in national and international advocacy. The access to up-dated information on local solutions via the online Catalogue will be valuable for the increasing number of rural people with smart phones in East Africa, as even among poor people, the leaders have them already now. This information can be used for simple solutions as a manual and for advanced solutions as advice and inspiration. **Look out for the forthcoming Catalogue of Local Solutions and other EASE&CA project activities from: <http://www.inforse.org/africa/EASE.htm>**

How Clean Energy Could Power a COVID19 Recovery in Kenya and East Africa



Decentralized off-grid energy system.
Photo: Uganda Solar Energy Association

Kenya Government's four key pillars of economic growth and 'the Big Four' (economic blueprint developed by the government to foster economic development and provide a solution to the various socio-economic problems facing Kenyans) are energy-driven. These include food security and nutrition; affordable universal health care; affordable housing; and enhancing manufacturing. Fortunately, the on-going development of clean energy technologies represents a major opportunity for growth of Kenya's green industry in manufacturing. Clean energy is produced through methods that do not release greenhouse gases or any other pollutants.

This can be a major sector of industrial growth in Kenya as a regional technology hub. But it could also turn out to be a missed opportunity, if not pursued. Furthermore, energy for households and health facilities is similarly critical in the battle against the COVID19 pandemic.

COVID19 is adding more stress to the most vulnerable people in addition to poverty and the climate crisis. This has created an urgent need for interventions to comprehensively and collaboratively respond to its impact.

According to Justus Munyoki of SusWatch Kenya – an sustainable development-oriented NGO network, 'The core of this response is promoting clean energy as it has multiple dividends that can support Government's 'Big 4' while providing hope to the vulnerable people affected by poverty, climate change and the COVID19 pandemic'. It is essential to help countries to recover from COVID19 pandemic through green plans that include clean energy.

In addition, clean energy options provide an affordable launchpad for Kenya and other developing countries to meet their adaptation and mitigation targets, as per the Nationally Determined Contributions, which are supposed to be reviewed by 2020.

Clean energy is particularly important for regions where the national electricity grid is unreliable or even non-existent, as it provides solutions that can be swiftly replicated in support of key sectors like agriculture, education, improved health and industrial development.

While nearly half of the world relies on polluting fuels and cook with inefficient devices with considerable health and environmental costs, access to clean energy also makes the COVID19 preventive procedures of social distancing and availability of water for hand washing viable, by enabling people to stay in touch online to learn, share information but also working from home.

In addition, while eleven million people worldwide were employed in the renewables sector in 2018, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates that this number could rise to 42 million jobs globally by 2050. Through decentralized, off-grid energy systems, small businesses could be helped to further grow and succeed.

Kenya has been ranked fifth globally in an annual Bloomberg index measuring investments and opportunities in clean energy, which underline the country's position as a pillar for promoting clean energy in Africa. Therefore investment in clean energy that is still in infant stage, could deliver Kenya's 'Big 4', while having positive spill over economic, environmental and social development returns in the East African region.

Nature-Based Solutions for People & Planet are Key at the 2021 Climate Talks



On 15th July 2020, an online High Level side event ‘Accelerating Transformation to the 2030 Agenda: Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) for People and Planet’ took place as part of the High Level Political Forum – a United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, that provides for the full and effective participation of all States Members of the UN and States members of specialized agencies.

The Event was organized by the Permanent Missions to the UN of: Costa Rica, United Kingdom, Belize; the Delegation of the European Union, the UN Environment Programme UNEP), the UNDP, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Wide Fund for Nature.

UNEP warns that nature is in crisis, as we are losing species at a rate 1,000 times greater than at any other time in recorded human history and one million species face extinction. Also IUCN ‘s Report (2018) notes that seventy-six percent of freshwater species endemic to the Lake Victoria Basin, including many species important to local livelihoods, are threatened with extinction. IUCN defines Nature-based Solutions as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”

The High Level Event on July 15, 2020 brought to light the importance of Nature-based Solutions in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the opportunities from the key decision points provided by to be agreed at the fifteenth Parties to the CBD (CBD Change Conference to be to 12 November 2021. Head - Inger Andersen told months, 11 trillion USD has economic stimulus struggled to raise the

‘11 trillion USD has already been availed in form of COVID19 economic stimulus packages in a few months, yet the world has struggled over years to raise 100 billion USD for climate finance ‘.

the global biodiversity framework meeting of the Conference of the CoP15), the 26th UN Climate held in Glasgow (Scotland) from 1 Speaking at the Event, UNEP participants that, ‘In just a few already been availed in form of packages yet the world has needed climate finance over years. It is nonetheless extremely important to ensure that the economic recovery from COVID19 is nature positive and drives nature based solutions’. This is in in big contrast to the failure to raise 100 billion US dollars for climate finance on which pledges were made more than five years ago!

As one of the key messages, the event underscored the need for the COVID19 Economic Recovery Plans to better integrate nature in development. Speakers reminded participants that the challenges the COVID19 pandemic had brought to the world highlighted just how inter-connected human health and that of the planet were. Elizabeth Mrema, Head of the CBD secretariat warned that, ‘The protection and sustainable use of biodiversity must be embedded into policy to guide post-pandemic recovery making sure that all initiatives work with nature and not against it’.

Costa Rica has 30 years of experience investing in nature based solutions and the results prove that it was the best political decision the country made. As Pamela Castillo, Deputy Minister of Environment, Costa Rica echoed, ‘Nature based solutions are helping to protect the country’s unique ecosystems, enhancing community resilience to climate change and are the main resources for development at the local level’.