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COMMUNIQUE BY WOMEN CLEAN ENERGY CHAMPIONS: GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO MORE TO ENSURE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY

A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Between September 19 and 20, 2024, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) in partnership with the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA) and with support from BothEnds organised a High-Level Women's Clean Energy Conference. The conference, whose main objective was to enable women to discuss how to strengthen efforts to promote clean renewable energy services for all in Uganda and the East African region, took place at Esella Country Hotel-Kampala. Over 50 women leaders from Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Netherlands participated in the conference.

The first-of-its-kind conference was organised as part of AFIEGO and IGEN-EA's efforts to enable citizens shape implementation of Uganda's 2023 Energy Transition Plan (ETP). The ETP is the Ugandan government's blueprint for increasing universal access to modern energy.

The conference recognised the critical environmental, social, economic and cultural importance of universal access to clean, affordable and reliable electricity.

Further, the conference appreciated the role of women, other citizens, government, development partners and private sector's efforts in improving access to clean energy services. These efforts have been promoted through policies, laws and projects including Uganda's 1999 Electricity Act as amended, the National Energy policy, the Renewable Energy policy, the Electricity Scale-Up Project, the Free Electricity Connection policy and others.

However, the participants at the conference expressed concern that despite the above efforts, access to clean affordable and reliable renewable energy remains a challenge. Women's access to clean energy especially remains a challenge with available information showing that at national level in Uganda, of the 24% households with access to grid power, 52.4% are male-headed compared to 48.4% female-headed ones¹.

At the end of the two days' conference, the over 50 participants including the private sector, civil society, the academia, district women leaders, youth activists, journalists, religious leaders and

¹ Energia: https://www.energia.org/assets/2021/02/Country-brief-Uganda_Nov2020_final.pdf

cultural leaders from five countries made a number of observations and recommendations as discussed below.

B. OBSERVATIONS

- (a) Power of women:** First, the conference participants recognised the power of women in creating positive change. The conference participants observed that because women often outnumber men in population size and because they shape cultures through their nurturing roles, women can be catalysts of positive change. The conference participants, who paid special recognition to women leaders that are at the forefront of demanding for clean energy such those under Save Lamu, resolved to continue working in solidarity and building women power to promote clean energy.
- (b) Oil and women:** While the women are desirous of amplifying and solidifying their efforts to enhance women’s access to clean energy, they observed that it was important to take note of the negative impacts that women impacted by oil and gas projects in Uganda, Tanzania and the DRC are suffering. They also noted that it is important to support the women to address these impacts.
- (c) Impacts faced by women:** The conference participants, who included women displaced for oil projects in Uganda, noted the following as some of various oil projects’ impacts on women and girls: displacement amidst inadequate compensation, elephant-human conflicts that have caused deaths and negative impacts to fishing livelihoods. Others include increased school drop-out rates especially amongst girls, family break-ups and gender-based violence (GBV). Worth noting is that over 35,079 women have been displaced for the Tilenga and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) in Uganda projects alone!
- (d) Karuma hydropower dam challenges:** As earlier noted, the women resolved to work together to engage the Ugandan government amongst other stakeholders to address the above impacts. They also resolved to work together to engage government to address the challenges faced by women that were displaced for the Karuma hydropower dam project in Uganda. While the 600MW dam is expected to be commissioned this year, women and others that were displaced for the project are embroiled in compensation disputes with government. The conference’s participants observed that government and its partners need to do better by ensuring that they pay women and other citizens prompt, fair and adequate compensation in compliance with Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution.
- (e) Clean cooking challenges:** Another area where government needs to do better is increasing access to clean cooking energy. The conference’s participants heard that at 15%, access to clean cooking in Uganda remains low. Cooking energy is largely women’s energy and where government fails to ensure that all women have access to clean energy, women remain condemned to use biomass including firewood, charcoal and others. This endangers

women's health, takes away time that they could have used for productive purposes and increases their risk to sexual violence, not to mention GBV.

- (f) **Limited information on clean cooking technologies:** Private sector members at the conference empowered women at the conference on the various clean cooking technologies that are available for urban and rural households. It was however observed that public access to information on these technologies remains low. This knowledge gap contributes to the continued reliance on traditional energy sources including firewood, charcoal, kerosene stoves, and others that are not only harmful to women's health but also contribute to environmental degradation. The women observed that government and other partners need to close the information gap.
- (g) **Skilling women for clean energy entrepreneurship:** The conference participants recognised and appreciated GIZ for supporting clean energy training for Ugandans. The training, which is at no cost, is available at the Nakawa Vocational Institute. The women observed that there is need for more awareness raising on this opportunity, while ensuring that training centres are also set up in all the regions of Uganda. This will ensure that rural girls and young women benefit from these training centres.
- (h) **Inclusion of oil and gas as transition fuels in 2023 ETP:** The conference's participants heard that in December 2023, the Ugandan government launched the country's Energy Transition Plan (ETP). The plan is aimed at enabling universal access to clean energy for Ugandans. While the ETP is also aimed at supporting Uganda to attain its greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, the plan includes oil and gas as transition fuels, the conference participants heard. Yet these and other fossil fuels account for 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of global carbon emissions². The participants called on government to power the country through clean energy.
- (i) **Absence of Solar Energy Policy:** The participants also heard that Uganda lacks a Solar Energy, Consumer Protection law and others needed to ensure access to affordable, reliable and safe clean energy technologies. The lack of clear guidelines on managing solar energy especially battery waste was also discussed at the conference.
- (j) **Shrinking civic space:** Further, the participants observed that many of the women and other environmental and human rights defenders have continued to suffer harassment, intimidation, arrests, detentions and other threats in the process of doing their work.
- (k) **Failure by the government to provide funding for renewable energy and over reliance on the private sector:** The government of Uganda has continued to ignore the need to invest in clean renewable energy. Instead, they continue to invest billions of dollars in oil,

² UN: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Fossil%20fuels%20%E2%80%93%20coal%2C%20oil%20and,they%20trap%20the%20sun's%20heat.>

gas, big hydro dams, transmission lines and others at the expense of clean renewable energy. There is clear evidence that only renewable energy such as off-grid solar can meet the energy needs of Ugandans including women, youth, elderly, health centres, schools and others that require clean affordable and reliable energy.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The conference made the following recommendations:

- i. **Uganda's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) should put in place a gender sensitive solar energy policy** while the Ugandan parliament should fasttrack processes of enacting the Consumer Protection Bill. This will enhance women's access to clean energy.
- ii. **The MEMD should reform the Energy Transition Plan to focus solely on renewable energy.** This will support Uganda to attain her climate change targets. Climate change disproportionately affects women and any efforts to address it positively impact women. The Kenyan government, which has shown climate leadership, should engage the Ugandan, Tanzanian and Congolese governments to focus on investment in renewables, instead of fossil fuel projects.
- iii. **Governments and development partners in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the DRC should set up clean energy training centres that teach certified courses in East Africa.** The training centres should be accessible to communities. Quotas should be set to ensure women's participation and to promote clean energy entrepreneurship by women.
- iv. **Civil society organisations and private sector entities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the DRC should sensitise women** on available clean energy alternatives. This can be done by supporting community meetings, radio talk shows and the establishment of clean energy hubs as demonstration centres among others.
- v. **Working with oil companies and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda (PAU), the MEMD of Uganda and the Tanzanian government** should ensure that women who were displaced for oil projects, and those that are still suffering impacts are supported so that they are restored to their pre-displacement levels.
- vi. **Finally, the East African governments should improve the civic space for women environmental and human rights defenders (WEHRDs)** to support women efforts to promote human rights observance, environmental conservation and clean energy access.

Signed by the conference participants

No.	Name	Institution & Position
1.	Diana Nabiruma	Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)
2.	Birungi Harriet	Hoima District Local Government
3.	Namboozo Edith	Center for Conservation and Ecoenergy Initiative (CCEI)
4.	Kyomuhendo Salmah	Uganda Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Alliance (UNREEA)
5.	Atuhaire Oliver	Kakumiro district Councilor
6.	Ashley Katumwesigye	East African Crude Oil Pipeline Host Communities (EACOPHC)
7.	Ategeka Mercy	Kikuube district
8.	Anabelle Willeme	BothEnds, Netherlands
9.	Raya Famau	Lamu Women Alliance, Kenya
10.	Rehema Peters	Partnership for Green Future, Tanzania
11.	Kamanyire Serinah	Kikuube district
12.	Angella Muhindo	Kasese district
13.	Ngadriko Gombe Irene	FORED, DRC
14.	Biwaga Esther	Buliisa district
15.	Olivia Nyakato	Buliisa district
16.	Getrude Angom	Kampala district
17.	Tugume Racheal	Hoima district
18.	Rachael Amongin	Kampala district
19.	Margret Kwijuka	Kampala district
20.	Comfort Aganyira	Hoima district
21.	Catherine Twongyeirwe	Kampala district
22.	Nassuna Rebecca Margaret	Tulip Women Initiative on Nature and Energy
23.	Ayebare Proscovia	A pen for Africa (APFAF)
24.	Joan Atuha	African Institute for Climate Action and Justice (AFICAJ)
25.	Irene Twongyerwe	Women for Green Economy Movement (WOGEM)
26.	Olive Atuhaire	Youth Network

27.	Nabulo Joy	Environmental Governance Institute (EGI)
28.	Nakalyowa Winnie	Strategic Response on Environmental Conservation (STREC)
29.	Vivian Mbabazi	Kampala district
30.	Namirembe Rosemary	Masaka district
31.	Kihembo Sarah	Women on Environment Mission (WEM)
32.	Caroline Kinkuhaire	Youth for Green Communities
33.	Lois Sabila	Oil Refinery Residents Association
34.	Hildah Nsimire	Women Initiative on Conservation and Environment
35.	Birungi Oliver	Center for Environmental Research and Agricultural Innovations (CERAI)
36.	Abigaba Esther	Nature Talk Africa
37.	Birungi Josephine Apio	Makerere University Business School,
38.	Nawenja Esther Mwanje	Makerere University Business School
39.	Amina Acola	Probono Initiative
40.	Apio Jane	Nkozi University
41.	Sr. Pauline Nnamuddu	Kampala district
42.	Karungi Noeline	Hoima district
43.	Babra Kembabazi	Kampala district
44.	Hellen Lubowa	Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA)
45.	Rehema Peter	Tanzania
46.	Ana Peirera Xambria	Netherlands
47.	Patrick Edema	Kampala district
48.	John Kibego	Hoima district