



YOUTH FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE ACTION
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**YOUTH COMMUNIQUE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY: THE
GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT YOUTH INITIATIVES THAT DRIVE
PROGRESS OF SDGs AT LOCAL LEVELS.**

INTRODUCTION

On August 12, 2025, Youth For Environmental Justice and Climate Action (YECA) Uganda joined the rest of the world to commemorate the international youth day themed "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond" which places a strong emphasis on the transformative role of young people in the localization of the SDGs and translating the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into local realities.

The 2025 theme recognizes that young people are not merely beneficiaries of development but are active agents of change, innovation, and leadership. It acknowledges the need for youth inclusion in local governance processes, as their creativity, energy, and community knowledge are essential for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges of our time.

Over the past decade, global institutions have increasingly acknowledged that achieving the SDGs by 2030 will depend on how effectively they are localized and translated into concrete actions at the community level.

According to recent reports by UN-Habitat and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), it was revealed that at least 65 percent of SDG targets relate directly to the mandates of local and regional governments (LRGs). Consequently, there is a growing imperative to empower youth as partners in SDG localization processes, as they are often deeply embedded in their communities and possess unique insights into local development needs.

Youth for Environmental Justice commends the government for its leadership and support towards youth through various programs and initiatives in collaboration with partners to implement SDGs, especially SDGs 6, 7, and 13. However, these efforts must be scaled up to reach those who are most disadvantaged. Youth are the resource and backbone on which the country must rely to advance sustainable development and generate innovative solutions.

To commemorate the International Youth Day, YECA organised a clean-up exercise with youth around Makerere University, and this was followed by a youth discussion to understand issues that have limited implementation of SDGs in Uganda, with emphasis on SDGs 6,7, and 13, which are on clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, and Climate Action.

Over the years, YECA has been working with youth from local to Global levels and influenced thousands of youth to join climate justice movements through using a number of strategies, including litigation, community empowerment, and advocacy campaigns, among others.

Therefore, from the meeting that was organized, we share observations that the youth indicated that they have limited implementation of SDGs in Uganda, and recommendations that should be implemented to ease SDGs implementation by 2030. The observations were made based on three SDGs, which YECA works on with Environmental and human rights defenders in Uganda.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE MEETING.

- **Low electricity coverage and access.** At the meeting, members observed that, despite the government's commitment to extend electricity access to the majority of Uganda's population under the Electricity Access Scale Up Project (EASP), Uganda still has low levels of electrification, with only 22% connected to the grid and 38% using solar power. The participants further observed that, although Uganda has invested much in hydro-based electricity with surplus capacity, the majority of the rural population still relies on the use of dirty fuels to meet their energy needs. The reported 13% of the rural population, which is connected to electricity, is far below the minimum targets to achieve universal access to electricity for all. Youth also noted that even those connected to electricity still use it only for lighting and resort to degrading the environment in search of firewood and charcoal for cooking. Indeed, whereas the members applauded some of the government initiatives like the free connections policy and the feed-in tariffs, aimed at accelerating electricity access, they pointed out that these initiatives cannot electrify the population since the majority of the population is poor and can therefore barely afford the current high electricity tariffs.
- **Environmental degradation.** In addition, the Youth expressed concern about the rampant destruction of the country's few remaining forests for sugarcane and other agricultural activities. Youth said that Uganda has lost its forest cover from 24% in 1990 to 8% by 2021, when the NRM regime has been in place. This has been made worse by a lack of political will, whereby the president has given away some of Uganda's natural forests and wetlands to investors to set up industries and factories for production. This has greatly hindered SDGs implementation by allowing business operations in protected areas.
- **Failed investment in energy projects.** The Youth also noted that whereas the government has invested in several energy projects that were completed by the government, like Isimba dam and Karuma hydro dam, these investments have not reduced the power prices, and the cost of doing business in Uganda is still high. The members observed that most of the energy projects have been constructed through external borrowing, which has increased the country's debt burden, coupled with poor project implementation, cost escalations, and poor utilization of the borrowed money. It was noted that, to date, the 600MW Karuma hydropower dam has yet to be commissioned, which has cost the government an accrual interest claim of over UGX 113.93 billion in delayed payments. The Auditor General's report 2022 notes that on the progress of electricity generation infrastructure projects covering the FY2022/2023,

the Karuma dam was planned to be completed within 60 months, but the actual duration of implementation is currently more than 114 months, a delay of over 54 months. Therefore, the project cost that was initially estimated at USD 1.7 billion, approximately UGX 6.323 trillion, the charge has since skyrocketed to 8.183 trillion Shillings due to implementation challenges.

- **Electricity affordability and accessibility:** At the meeting, the Youth observed that achieving universal access to affordable electricity in the sub-Saharan Africa region by 2030 would require connecting 90 million people annually, which is three times the current rate of progress, according to the International Energy Agency, 2022 report. The Youth expressed concern that despite the abundant power capacity, the energy sector faces significant challenges, including high electricity access costs. The members noted that Uganda's electricity infrastructure is concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural communities that make up more than a third of the population with limited access to dependable electricity. In addition, according to the Uganda National Household Survey report 2024, only 25.3% of the population has access to electricity, with most connections located in the urban areas. They noted that the urban-rural gap in electricity access remains a significant obstacle to economic development, the provision of social services, and the overall quality of life in rural regions.
- **Inclusion of oil and gas as transition fuels in 2023 ETP:** The youth noted 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, yet these and other fossil fuels account for 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of global carbon emissions. The participants called on the government to power the country through clean energy.
- **Shrinking civic space:** Further, youth observed that many of them have been brutally arrested and detained whenever they come out to peacefully protest against the ongoing negative impacts of the EACOP project. Many of the Youth 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. This has limited the youth's participation in the replication and implementation of SDGs in Uganda. Youth want free space where they can freely express themselves about the issues affecting them for a better future.
- **Limited Funding to Renewable Energy;** Youth indicated that failure by the government to provide funding for renewable energy and over-reliance on the private sector have limited implementation of SDGs in Uganda. 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, 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, the elderly, health centers, schools, and others that require clean, affordable, and reliable energy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) **Increase the level of electricity access and reduce the electricity tariffs:** Despite the heavy investments in financing energy projects such as big dams and other renewable projects, the level of access among the East African population remains low because of high electricity tariffs. Youth want the government to fully utilise the available potential affordable energy sources, particularly off-grid solar, to electrify the population.
- b) Youth are calling on the Government to support youth-led and youth-serving initiatives at the local level to realise the importance of SDGs.
- c) Further, youth want the government to integrate youth perspectives into policy formulation and local planning processes and invest in youth capacity building and infrastructure to facilitate their participation.
- d) Furthermore, youth want the government to foster an enabling environment that upholds the rights of young people and promotes intergenerational dialogue at the community level.
- e) The Ministry of Energy should reform the Energy Transition Plan to focus solely on renewable energy. This will support Uganda to attain its climate change targets.

For more contact Asiimwe Marry YECA communications person at yecaug@gmail.com or +256789215552.

Signed by Event Participants

No	Name	Designation
1	Kyaligonza sunny	Environmental Defender
2	Muhumuza daniel	Student
3	Tumusiime obitry	Student
4	Ayesiza Stephen	Youth Climate Activist
5	Alituha caroline	Gender Activist
6	Tumusiime Robert	Youth Environmental Defender
7	Atuharwe Juliet	Student
8	Murungi Denis	Student
9	Katusiime Naume	Student
10	Kabasinguzi Grace	Student
11	Karuhanga Langton	Environmental Defender
12	Alituha Vivian	Youth Climate Activist
13	Kyosaba Gloria	Environmental Defender
14	Atulinda Yedion	CERAI
15	Domitia Tibakunirwa	Youth Climate Activist
16	Ahumuza Praise	Student
17	Aliguma Sayuni	Student
18	Mukonyezi Enoch	Student
19	Nomugisha Juliet	Student
20	kanyabazana getridah	Student
21	Asiimwe Chrispus	Climate Activist
22	Isingoma Yoab	Environmental Defender
23	Arinaitwe Precious	Environmental Defender
24	Kusiima Jolly	Youth Climate Activist

25.	Gerald Barekye	Environmental Defender
26.	Marry Asiimwe	YECA
27.	Muzoora Amon	Environmental Defender
28.	Arijuka Andrew	YECA
29.	kyomukama Pulsira	Gender Activist
30.	Richard Ochen	YECA
31.	Omoro John	Student.

END.