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The placement of the poor in the clean energy matrix

Although clean energy is sufficiently sustainable, user-friendly, people-centred and context-specific, it is, however, not that cheap as we are made to believe.

When the discourse of clean energy is propagated, the position and the overall concerns of the poor have never been clearly and effectively factored.

As such, the poor always find themselves at the mercy of the highly un-exclusive jargon with little or no relevance to the poor. In short, the poor are always left behind against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) discourse, which no one should be left behind.

Inasmuch as the poor people or poor economies would want to make significant transformations from the fossil fuel-based energy to renewable energy, a number of factors militate against this shift.

These are namely poverty, poor energy literacy, lack of voice, illiteracy, and ignorance as well as being overburdened with the ghost of uncleared baggage of debts, both domestic and international.

These debts may emanate from the domestic lenders such as banks and private lending institutions, not forgetting the international monetary institutions like the scaring International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the other related institutions of the same fibre.

Despite having poor structures and sometimes substandard dwellings, the majority of the poor cannot articulate why they need clean energy in the first place, and in the background of dilapidated, unfriendly, demeaning and harsh dwellings.

Of course, the poor cannot understand why something clean should be placed in sometimes inhabitable conditions. Instead, why not improve the infrastructure first and then fit the houses with the new clean energy gadgets that would improve the quality of life, not only in the houses, but also the type of projects they would want to do to improve their livelihoods.

In this regard, the poor are not saying no to the provision of clean energy, but they are worried about which should come first. Before this tremendous revolution or smart transition, there are some basic needs which should be fulfilled first before talking about whether the energy is clean or dirty, that is if they do mind about the quality of the energy in the first place.

The regular and periodic climate change conferences have not been successful and meaningful enough in the eyes of the ordinary and the poor people.

This comes as a result of not much work having been done in terms of energy literacy

campaigns, awareness and education, which are practically engaging and inclusive.

To date, a number of communities, towns and cities in Africa are still experiencing energy poverty, climate and energy literacy due to lack of sustainable engaging efforts.

Furthermore, not many African countries have shown interests in uplifting the living standards of their people because of corruption, nepotism and poor governance.

Only a few African countries like Botswana, Rwanda, Tunisia, Morocco, Namibia, among others, have demonstrated efforts to uplift the living standards of their people. With the abundance of natural resources and mineral wealth, many African countries cannot provide clean energy to its people, which is quite ironic and paradoxical.

In this regard, energy poverty is quite inherent in African countries, whether it is clean or dirty, as the majority of the poor have never sufficiently experienced even the unclean energy being currently phased out.

This is worsened by the majority of companies who have come to Africa to loot minerals, disguised as investors, without contributing to community building and improvement of infrastructure. They always leave these communities worse off and poverty stricken than they were in the beginning.

These companies are not alone, as they are aided by corrupt and oppressive African governments with undesirable human rights record and rule of law.

Against these backgrounds, it is a mockery to propagate issues of clean energy in unclean

environments, where everything needs a complete overhaul.

Even the local companies, although reeling under excessive costs and punitive borrowings, have not made much efforts to contribute to the livelihoods of the poor.

There isn't any meaningful partnerships or collaborations between the local companies and governments. Even the tenders for clean energy development and production are not consortium driven but individually, politically and selfishly driven.

The end product, in this regard, is always energy poverty and stagnation.

Many African governments lack malleable and inclusive laws, with the capacity to support direct foreign investments, in a meaningful way. As a result of these glaring pitfalls and challenges, the dream of reaching the middle-income status by 2030 will not be easy to attain.

In this regard, 2030 is an agenda for sustainable development which presently lacks sustainability. Furthermore, SDG 7 highlights that member States should have access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

This, in turn, would be seen promoting job creation of local communities, thereby accelerating economic revival and poverty eradication, among other things.

Good sounding as this may be, surprisingly some African governments remain stagnant, paranoid and unwilling to uplift the standards of the poor from entrenched poverty, simply because the governments can hardly walk the talk.

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