



November 1, 2023

A Green and Inclusive Future for Youth and Women in Nigeria

a multistakeholder dialogue

On November 1st, against the backdrop of Africa Youth Day 2023, INCLUDE hosted a Multi Stakeholder Dialogue in Abuja, themed “A Green and Inclusive Future for Youth and Women in Nigeria”. In attendance (onsite and online) were around 80 key stakeholders in Nigeria’s energy transition, including young people, researchers, civil society, NGO and private sector representatives, honorable members of the House of Representatives, and representatives of several Federal ministries, agencies and parastatals.

1. Welcome Address

Executive Director of INCLUDE - Dr. Anika Altaf, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Nigeria - Ambassador Wouter Plomp, were in attendance to welcome attendees to the dialogue. Anika Altaf introduced the research project as the result of a timely collaboration between the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and INCLUDE, geared towards scoping existing knowledge and emerging trends on the topic of youth employment, low-carbon transitions and the future of work in Africa and facilitating engagement with key stakeholders in this field. She emphasized that even though the results and outputs of the low-carbon transition (LCT) are critical, it is also important to focus on the process, in order not to lose the justice aspect of the transition. Ambassador Wouter Plomp also welcomed everyone to the dialogue, pointing out that it is a no-brainer to ensure that women and young people are meaningfully included in the critical decisions and process of the LCT.



Photo by: Emeka Kuzman

2. Gallery Walk

To open up the discussions for the day, the moderator of the dialogue - Aniebet Obot (Nigerian Youth Representative, Climate Policy Champion & Member of the Project Advisory Committee) invited everyone to engage in a gallery walk for 15 minutes, taking a look at comparative graphs/diagrams on the reality of

jobs and employment across Nigeria, Kenya and India. He encouraged attendees to exchange their personal perspectives on the data and to reflect critically on how it resonated with their experiences as well as the overarching theme of building a green and inclusive future for youth and women in Nigeria.

3. Presentation & Summary of Key Research Findings

Research Consultant - Victoria Many, and Project Lead - Siri Lijfering subsequently took the floor to present the key findings and insights from the evidence synthesis paper and the case study research on opportunities for women and youth in Nigeria's low carbon transition. Among other things, this research highlighted the need to ensure an element of justice is integrated into Nigeria's low carbon transition programmes and policies to ensure that the transition would not repeat the same mistakes as in the fossil fuel-based economy. This is evident from several realities, including the "expatriate syndrome" (where jobs in Nigeria favor foreigners over local talent) leading to inequitable distribution of jobs and opportunities, overreliance of the transition efforts on established fossil fuel infrastructure - neglecting rural communities that lack clean energy infrastructure, and the exclusion of disadvantaged groups (especially women and young people) in decision making processes.

Furthermore, the research shows that the commitment to LCT is affected by Nigeria's heavy reliance on oil and gas as well as competing socio-economic interests. Stakeholder priorities are based on varying interests that best serve their respective mandates (eg. state governments pursuing territorial equity in energy resources, civil society's interventions and efforts on environmental justice and private sector advocacy for protection of investments), and this also emphasizes the multifaceted nature of the energy transition. Again, there is a prevailing conflict between environmental preservation and employment generation. As a result of this, the concept of a "just transition" is entangled in this dilemma, resulting in a disproportionate burden and several unintended consequences that affect women and young people.

The research also highlighted some laudable renewable energy initiatives in Nigeria such as the rural electrification drive, the great green wall initiative, and climate commitments in Nigeria through the enactment of the 2021 Climate Change Act and the establishment of the National Climate Change Council.

4. Interactive Rapid-Fire Round

Following the presentation of research findings, an interactive feedback session was facilitated by Sonia Onovughakpo Fajusigbe (Economic, Trade & Investment Affairs Adviser, Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Lagos and Member of the Project Advisory 3 Committee). She noted that with 70% of the Nigerian population being considered youth, Nigeria has the workforce to power the energy transition. She then opened the floor for participants to share their reflections, contributions and policy recommendations, based on the research findings.



Photo by: Emeka Kuzman

Participants shared several insightful recommendations and contributions, including:

4.1 Standardizing and Improving Training Opportunities

Some participants noted that in recent times, there has been accelerated interest in building capacity for solar installations among young people. A key recommendation is to leverage on this growing interest to invest in hands-on formal training on renewable energy techniques. Other participants also emphasized the need to standardize training on green skills both in formal and non-formal education, issuing certifications for them as these certificates are often looked upon as validation of expertise within the Nigerian socio-economic context. Beyond technical and vocational training, participants recommended focusing on soft and foundational skills development among young people (e.g. interviewing and other employability skills) in order to improve their chances in the job market. Working together with technical and vocational training institutes (TVET) and universities to 'green curricula' was put forward as a recommendation. Also the need to raise awareness on issues related to climate change from primary school level was mentioned as an approach to bring the next generation on board.

4.2 Lowering Systemic Barriers, Recognising Youth Heterogeneity & Fostering Inclusion

Participants also pointed out that there are existing barriers to accessing information and training opportunities among young people, including internet access and transportation costs. They suggested disseminating information on training opportunities in non-conventional ways (beyond the internet and social media) to reach all cadres of young people. They also recommended a more intentional outlook by training providers to include minoritized groups of young people, such as young people living with

disabilities. Overall, participants noted that training opportunities need to reflect the heterogeneous nature of Nigerian youth.

4.3 Localization and Community Ownership

A resounding consensus among participants was the need to foster community ownership and facilitate grassroots buy-in in order to ensure the sustainability of renewable energy initiatives across communities. Some suggestions include creating a private-sector driven ecosystem, co-designing sustainability plans for local communities and localizing relevant skill sets for the maintenance of green energy infrastructure, investing in a business development approach to incubate ideas of local youth to enable them generate wealth and stimulate opportunities for job creation for young people by young people in the green economy, actively engaging civil society organizations and local development actors, and recognising/leveraging existing indigenous knowledge to support the transition.

4.4. Adopting a Gender Transformative Approach to Nigeria's LCT

Participants noted that it was important to take a gender transformative approach to the transition for more equitable outcomes. They highlighted that the energy transition presents an opportunity to address gender norms and rethink widely accepted perceptions of the role of women in economic production. Some specific recommendations include addressing the impact of childcare and unpaid domestic labor on women's participation in the energy sector and investing in professional mentorship for women to position them for high-value jobs and opportunities within the context of the transition. Also, as women tend to seek out opportunities first in the informal sector, another important intervention is to center equity and decency in the informal sector. In addition, a participant noted that women's access to land is a critical issue that needs to be centered in Nigeria's energy transition, especially as the majority of food in Nigeria is currently being produced by smallholder women farmers.

4.5 Defining the Concept of a Just Transition for the Nigerian Context

Participants agreed that it is important to zoom into the meaning of a just transition specifically in the Nigerian and African context. They called for a definition geared towards youth empowerment and a transition that moves from a system of poverty to one that fosters independence, innovation and growth. Beyond creating jobs, they noted that decarbonisation and the LCT in Nigeria should be about creating sustainable livelihoods. Participants added that a just transition in Nigeria will require a redistribution of wealth such that everyone can afford the transition.

4.6 Stimulating Green Entrepreneurship

Participants noted that a conducive business climate and an enabling policy environment is critical to encourage green solutions. Some specific recommendations include: introducing incentives for renewable energy production - e.g tax rebates for imports, carbon credits (where helpful), increasing access to financial credit especially for the informal sector, and public sector investment in the security and safety of renewable energy infrastructure. Some participants also noted the need to raise strategic awareness among Nigerians about opportunities in the green economy, especially through early childhood education - in order to facilitate a "green mindset" as early as possible. In addition to the more popular opportunities in medicine and law, career opportunities like solar power engineering need to become more mainstream.

4.7 Acknowledging the Costs of the Energy Transition

A participant also pointed out that a reality check on the costs of the transition is pivotal. He noted that affordability and accessibility of renewable energy (e.g. solar power) remains an issue due to overwhelming

poverty levels. Individuals continue to struggle to pay tariffs in communities powered by mini grids and this calls to question the viability and productivity of mini grids in Nigeria.

4.8 Partnership & Coalition Building

Overall, participants called for more synergy and cross-sectoral collaboration between international development partners, civil society, private sector and government to accelerate progress towards a just transition for all. In his remarks, the Chair of the House of Representatives Committee on Renewable Energy, Hon. Victor Ogene thanked participants for their contributions. He noted that the Renewable Energy Committee was a first-of-its-kind, seeking to enact policies that drive renewable energy. He welcomed all recommendations and resolutions from the dialogue, for further engagement by the Committee.



Photo by: Emeka Kuzman

5. Creating a Unified Just Transition Roadmap

Led by Donald Ofoegbu (Stakeholder from Heinrich Boell Foundation) and Anika Altaf (Executive Director, INCLUE) participants were split into 4 groups (Action Stations) to reflect on the various pathways for a just energy transition. Faced with a similar dilemma as “The Chicken and Egg Paradox” (deciphering which one of the critical processes in the energy transition comes before another), participants worked together to create an inclusive roadmap for a just transition to a low-carbon Nigerian economy, creating a logical sequence of the interconnected processes (see box 1 for the full list) while identifying potential challenges, risks, opportunities and stakeholders.

A major insight from this exercise was participants' consensus on the need to prioritize participatory community engagement and stakeholder involvement from the onset, and more importantly in formulating gender and age-sensitive policies that will power the energy transition.

6. Wrap Up & Commitments

At the dialogue's close, stakeholders unanimously agreed on creating a Power BI dashboard to showcase "Who is doing what, where." This initiative aims to enhance cohesion and visibility. Additionally, there is a consensus to consolidate the stakeholder's chicken and hen framework into a unified document. This comprehensive framework, led by stakeholders, will play a crucial role in optimizing the implementation of decent jobs for youth and women in LCT, fostering transparency and collaborative engagement.

Wrapping up the dialogue, Anika Altaf thanked all attendees for their active participation and insightful contributions. She also expressed gratitude to the organizing team and Nigerian partners for putting together a highly rewarding event. Finally, she invited all participants to pick up "I WILL" cards, on which they signed their names, thereby committing to taking specific actions towards co-creating a green and inclusive future for women and youth in Nigeria.



Photo by: Emeka Kuzman

Box 1: List of Stages for an Inclusive Just Transition Pathway:

- **Comprehensive Stakeholder Identification:** Recognizing all stakeholders including marginalized groups like women, youth, and ethnic minorities to ensure their participation from the outset.
- **Inclusive Baseline Assessment:** A thorough appraisal of the current energy landscape that also accounts for the unique challenges and contributions of women, youth, and other marginalized groups.
- **Gender & Age-Sensitive Policy Formulation:** Crafting legislative frameworks that focus not just on low-carbon transition but also on creating "just jobs" specifically for women and youth.
- **Community-Led Pilot Projects:** Kick-starting localized projects led by or involving women and youth to test the viability of new technologies and social structures.
- **Targeted Funding & Inclusive Investment:** Establishing financial models that prioritize investment in ventures led by or benefiting women and youth.
- **Technological Adoption, Scaling & Training:** Widespread adoption of tested technologies, accompanied by skill-building programs aimed at empowering women and youth.
- **Capacity Building for Inclusive Governance:** Ensuring that women and youth are trained and actively participating in the management and maintenance of new systems.
- **Participatory Community Engagement:** Actively involving local communities in decision-making, with focus groups or community councils that ensure women and youth voices are considered.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation & Social Equity Audits:** Ongoing assessments that focus not just on technological impact but also on the distribution of benefits, especially to women and youth.
- **Policy Feedback Loop with Inclusive Benchmarks:** Adjusting policies based on periodic reviews, using gender- and age-disaggregated data to ensure inclusivity.
- **Transparent & Accessible Information Dissemination:** Communicating clearly to all stakeholders, making sure information is accessible to women and youth in various formats and languages.
- **Just Job Creation & Entrepreneurship Support:** Actively promoting and facilitating the establishment of green jobs and entrepreneurial ventures that are accessible to and suitable for women and youth.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades for Inclusive Access:** Retrofitting or building new infrastructure that meets the needs of marginalized communities, ensuring, for example, that women's safety is considered in energy access projects.
- **Inclusive Market Development:** Setting up markets for renewable technologies where women and youth can actively participate, either as consumers or entrepreneurs.
- **Social Equity Programs:** Implementation of programs that support the redistribution of benefits and opportunities, particularly for women and youth, ensuring they are not left behind in the transition.



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This multistakeholder dialogue report is a part of the collaborative research programme “A Green and Inclusive Future for Youth in the Global South” in partnership with The Broker, the African Studies Centre Leiden African Economic Research Consortium and supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). INCLUDE is an independent knowledge platform initiated by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2012, to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and effective policies. The platform is made up of researchers, development practitioners and policymakers, promoting evidence-based policymaking on inclusive development in Africa.

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