

Climate change urgency perspectives from Sub-Saharan Africa

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The IPCC 1.5°C report in October 2018, drove home the need for immediate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and so the risk of extreme events such as floods, droughts, heat waves and other changes which will impact on hundreds and millions of people. The 1.5°C report conveys the urgency of emissions reduction, yet still tends to fall back on a global framing of change and impacts that mask the difference in risks experienced by people across the world. For African nations and their populations, although there is uncertainty over regional and local levels of warming, Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing an upward trend in the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events such as droughts and floods which are having severe impacts on poverty, food security, and health and are exacerbated by low levels of adaptive capacity.

Climate impacts, even at 1.5°C, will increase poverty and widen inequalities; urban and some rural areas in Sub-Saharan Africa are likely to be most severely affected. Adaptation measures are needed to protect from current climate events, and inherently unequal climate impacts in the future, the [cost](#) of which must be met by the nations most responsible for causing the climate crisis through their historical emissions.

In a growing number of Sub-Saharan African communities, the urgency of the climate crisis is being amplified by the recent events such as the intense [Cyclone Idai](#). For rapidly growing coastal cities like [Beira](#), in Mozambique, the complete devastation that Idai brought has undoubtedly left the city's population demanding urgent and ambitious action, locally and globally, to rebuild and enhance the resilience of their city, people and society.

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, [land use change](#) driven by the need for land for agriculture as well as mining and logging, infrastructure and urbanisation is decreasing the resilience of communities. For example, deforestation is already severely affecting Malawian farmers' crop yields, building dependencies on inputs and imported seeds, and climate change will only make this worse.

All African nations are signatories to the Paris Agreement, with commitments to reducing emissions and adaptation made through their [NDCs](#), which at the same time recognise the urgent need to [improve energy access](#).

The Government of Kenya has formulated climate change response strategies such as [Climate Change Action Plan 2018-2022](#), [Adaptation Plan 2015-2030](#) and [Sustainable Energy Action Agenda](#) to steer the country on a low-carbon and resilient path.



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Business models such as decentralisation, digitisation, and electrification of transport have put Kenya's power sector at the core of energy decarbonisation.

However the urgency of climate change is perceived differently by governments in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the climate change crisis is well understood in a growing number of communities in South Africa. While the South African government "talks green" and introduces a [number of mitigation policies](#), it "walks dirty" by expanding the [construction of the coal power plants in the country](#).

Climate change responses need to be [embedded](#) in all efforts to address the developmental challenges prevalent in the global South, which include [poverty](#), hunger and unemployment. In the Sub-Saharan Africa context, climate change must be understood and communicated as a [developmental issue](#) and not just as an environmental issue.

There is no better time than now for the governments of these countries to pursue developmental pathways that focus on adaptation and building resilient infrastructure whilst integrating within them low carbon programs.



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