



INCLUSIVE GREEN ECONOMY NETWORK-EAST AFRICA  
Kampala, Uganda • Website: [www.igen-ea.org](http://www.igen-ea.org) • Email: [contact@igen-ea.org](mailto:contact@igen-ea.org)



November 20, 2023

Hon. Ruth Nankabirwa,  
Minister of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD),  
Kampala (U).

Dear Madame,

**RE: PETITION TO THE MINISTER OF ENERGY CALLING FOR PROMOTION OF  
CLEAN COOKING**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Greetings from the Inclusive Green Economy Network-East Africa (IGEN-EA). IGEN-EA is a network that brings together registered civil society organisations (CSOs) and private sector players that promote green economic alternatives that address human rights and climate change concerns. The network consists of members from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The green economic alternatives that the network members promote include clean energy, tourism, forestry, agriculture and fisheries, and natural resources management. IGEN-EA is currently hosted by the Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), a Ugandan non-profit.

IGEN-EA is writing this petition to you today because, in 2023, President Yoweri Museveni signed an executive order banning tree-cutting for commercial charcoal production as part of efforts to increase forest cover and protect the environment. The president's environmental conservation efforts are commendable and should be supported.

However, following the presidential directive, Ugandans were left wondering what clean cooking energy options they had. Without these options, Ugandans will continue to destroy forests to meet their households' cooking energy needs.



## 1. ACCESS TO COOKING ENERGY IN UGANDA

As you are aware, Ugandans' access to clean cooking energy options is limited. The 2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) shows that access to electricity is low, with only 19%<sup>1</sup> of households having access to grid electricity. On the other hand, the majority of households (27%)<sup>1</sup> use solar kits for lighting while 11%<sup>1</sup> use solar home systems.

Furthermore, the aforementioned survey showed that 94%<sup>1</sup> of Ugandan households rely on biomass in the form of charcoal and firewood to cook. UBOS indicates that 73%<sup>1</sup> households use firewood for cooking while 21%<sup>1</sup> use charcoal.

Data from 2018 by the United Nations showed that 10.7 million citizens<sup>2</sup>, in a country of 46.8 million, rely on charcoal to cook their meals.

Charcoal and firewood are used because they are accessible, reliable, and affordable, though charcoal prices have increased in recent years. Access to firewood has also become increasingly difficult in some areas of Uganda.

Available figures show that only 1.4%<sup>3</sup> of households in Uganda use electricity and other non-biomass options such as Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) to cook.

## 2. BARRIERS TO CLEAN COOKING IN UGANDA

Several factors undermine Ugandans' utilisation of clean cooking options. These are discussed hereunder.

- (a) Low energy access:** Access to electricity in Uganda remains low with only 19% of Ugandans having access to grid electricity. The low electricity access rate means that few Ugandans can enjoy grid power as a clean cooking alternative. Moreover, while the number of Ugandan households with access to off-grid solar is 38%, solar home systems (SHS) in rural households are mainly used for lighting, according to GIZ. Access to SHS therefore does not enable households to use clean options for cooking<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> 2019/2020 Uganda Household Survey: [https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09\\_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Daily Monitor; *Food insecurity hits Lango's charcoal production hotspots*: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/food-insecurity-hits-lango-s-charcoal-production-hotspots-4221354>

<sup>3</sup> Daily Monitor; *Energy efficient technologies cut electricity bill*: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/prosper/energy-efficient-technologies-cut-electricity-bill-4157682>

<sup>4</sup> GIZ; *Impact assessment of the solar electrification of micro enterprises, households and the development of the rural solar market*: [https://energypedia.info/images/d/d4/Impact\\_assessment\\_shs\\_preep\\_uganda\\_2009.pdf](https://energypedia.info/images/d/d4/Impact_assessment_shs_preep_uganda_2009.pdf)

- (b) High power prices:** Further, electricity prices in Uganda remain high with domestic consumers paying as much as Shs. 805<sup>5</sup> for a power unit, excluding service fees and value-added tax (VAT). While the Ministry of Energy together with other stakeholders introduced a special cooking tariff aimed at encouraging Ugandans to cook using electricity, the tariff is not inclusive. This is because a consumer needs to buy over 80 units of electricity<sup>5</sup> to enjoy this cooking tariff. A study on the *Impact of household electricity theft and unaffordability on electricity security: A case of Uganda* indicated that from the monthly income spendable on electricity as established by UBOS, rural and urban households could only afford 25.07 kWh (25.07 units) and 38.29 kWh (38.29 units)<sup>6</sup> respectively. This means that the majority of Ugandans cannot afford the number of units needed to enjoy the cooking tariff.
- (c) Delays to commission hydropower dams:** Uganda also suffers from the challenge of delays to commission hydropower dams, and completion of other infrastructure such as electricity transmission lines. These challenges contribute to high power tariffs. As you are likely aware, the commissioning of the Karuma hydropower dam, whose construction commenced over ten years ago in August 2013<sup>7</sup>, has been delayed. The dam was supposed to be commissioned in December 2018<sup>8</sup> but nearly five years later, works on the power plant are still ongoing. While Ugandans did not begin consuming power from the dam in 2018, they are servicing the loan<sup>9</sup> of the USD 1.7 billion dam. Ugandans cannot enjoy affordable power amidst such challenges. Deemed energy challenges, which cost Ugandans Shs. 113 billion<sup>10</sup> in the 2022/2023 financial year, also undermine access to affordable power and therefore clean cooking.
- (d) Failure to honour commitments:** In addition, when the Isimba hydropower dam was commissioned in 2019 by the president, the-then Minister of Energy, Hon. Irene Muloni, indicated that a unit of power from the dam would cost US cents 4.16<sup>11</sup> for the first 15 years of the dam's operation. Uganda Electricity Generation Company Ltd (UEGCL) has also indicated that the cost of a unit of power from Karuma dam would cost up to 5 US cents<sup>9</sup>. While Isimba Dam was commissioned, Ugandans are not enjoying the lower power tariffs. Power from Karuma dam was also reportedly evacuated to the grid. However, power prices remain high. Failure to honour commitments to reduce power tariffs is undermining clean cooking.

---

<sup>5</sup> Electricity Regulatory Authority; *Tariff schedules*: <https://www.era.go.ug/index.php/tariffs/tariff-schedules>

<sup>6</sup> Bernard M. Wabukala; *Impact of household electricity theft and unaffordability on electricity security: A case of Uganda*: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301421522006309>

<sup>7</sup> Daily Monitor; *Karuma dam nears light at the end of dark tunnel*: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/karuma-dam-nears-light-at-the-end-of-dark-tunnel-4059782>

<sup>8</sup> The Independent; *Why Karuma Dam commissioning has been extended again*: <https://www.independent.co.ug/karuma-dam-commissioning-extended-again/>

<sup>9</sup> NTV; *Power from Karuma dam to cost more*: <https://www.ntv.co.ug/ug/news/national/power-from-karuma-dam-to-cost-more-4305026>

<sup>10</sup> The Independent; *LOP Mpuuga queries UGX 113Bn budget for deemed energy*: <https://www.independent.co.ug/lop-mpuuga-queries-ugx-113bn-budget-for-deemed-energy/>

<sup>11</sup> ERA; *Isimba hydropower plant commissioned*: <https://www.era.go.ug/index.php/media-centre/what-s-new/269-isimba-hydropower-plant-commissioned>

- (e) **Fear:** The Ministry of Energy is encouraging Ugandans to use LPG to reduce households' reliance on biomass. However, even though 22% of the population can afford LPG at the household level, only 0.8% to 1% use it due to negative attitudes, safety concerns, difficult access, and the high initial cost of purchasing the cylinders.
- (f) **Low awareness levels:** Further, the private sector has come up with various innovative solutions including Lorena cookstoves, clean energy saving cookstoves, briquettes, electric pressure cookers, and others that are not only more efficient but would reduce consumer costs while addressing the climate crisis. However, consumer awareness remains low, reducing the uptake of these innovations.
- (g) **Solar cooking innovations:** In addition, Makerere University, the private sector and other stakeholders have made efforts to increase the clean cooking options in Uganda by assembling solar cookers<sup>12</sup>, solar cooking stoves, and other technology. However, challenges such as high initial cost, skepticism, limited access and others undermine the uptake of solar cookers.

### 3. REQUESTS

In light of the above, we request you to do the following:

- (i) **Implement measures to increase access to clean energy.** While the grid connection cost was lowered from Shs. 720, 883 to Shs. 470,000<sup>13</sup> this year, this price remains too high for the majority of Ugandans and undermines clean energy access.
- (ii) **The 2016 Compact Agreement between the government of Uganda and the UK government should be implemented.** Government should implement the Compact Agreement including putting in place an off-grid solar energy policy, enacting a solar consumer protection law, and empowering the Uganda Solar Association to create effective public awareness on the productive use of off-grid solar.
- (iii) **Segregate off-grid solar access from grid access:** The current reporting by government where off-grid solar access and grid access are combined are distorting the realities because the government continues to invest heavily in dams, transmission lines, and distribution services and yet over 90% of Ugandans cannot afford the grid tariff to use power for productive needs for example cooking.
- (iv) **In addition, your ministry should implement measures aimed at reducing power tariffs.** Poor planning that sees dams being completed before evacuation lines are constructed leading to deemed power challenges, delays to complete dams, corruption, unnecessary taxes such as VAT, service fees and other challenges should be addressed to ensure that Ugandans enjoy affordable power.

---

<sup>12</sup> Daily Monitor; *Makerere students assemble solar cooker*: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/lifestyle/reviews-profiles/makerere-students-assemble-made-in-uganda-solar-cooker-1674828>

<sup>13</sup> ERA; *Government reduces customer connection costs*: <https://www.era.go.ug/index.php/media-centre/what-s-new/441-government-reduces-customer-connection-costs#:~:text=In%20her%20statement%20delivered%20at,of%20UGX%20200%2C000%20and%20access>

- (v) **Failure or delays by the government to pay for power.** Unfortunately, many government institutions including Ministry of health, defense, and others owe companies like UMEME billions of shillings in unpaid power bills. The power sector cannot improve and become a self-sustaining arm if government continues to use power without paying for it. How can the government regulate private companies if the same government is the biggest defaulter?
- (vi) **Furthermore, your ministry should support the private sector to conduct awareness raising** to increase the uptake of clean cooking energy alternatives that will reduce pressure on Uganda's forests.
- (vii) **Finally, your ministry should conduct consumer awareness to address fear and laggard behaviour** that leads to low uptake of new technologies.

We look forward to a positive response from you.

Yours faithfully,



Dickens Kamugisha,  
CEO, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)  
AFIEGO coordinates IGEN-EA.

## **SIGNATORIES**

1. Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO), Uganda
2. Uganda National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Alliance (REA), Uganda
3. Centre for Sustainability Innovation and Research (CSIR), Uganda
4. Center for Citizens Conserving Environment and Management (CECIC), Uganda
5. Uganda Fridays for Future
6. Friends with Environment in Development, Uganda
7. Centre for Environmental Research and Agriculture Innovations (CERAI), Uganda
8. Toro Initiative for Socio-economic Development, Uganda
9. Guild Presidents Forum on Governance (GPFOG), Uganda
10. International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Uganda
11. Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA), Uganda
12. Agro-Tourism Association, Uganda
13. Strategic Response for Environment Conservation (STREC), Uganda
14. Civic Response on Environment and Development (CRED), Uganda

15. Lake Albert Children and Women Advocacy Development Organization (LACWADO), Uganda
16. Navigators of Development Association (NAVODA), Uganda
17. Friends with Environment in Development, Uganda
18. Youth for Green Communities, Uganda
19. Women for Green Economy Movement, Uganda
20. Tasha Research Institute Africa, Uganda
21. African Initiative on Food Security and Environment, Uganda
22. Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), Uganda
23. Food Rights Alliance, Uganda
24. Environment Governance Institute (EGI), Uganda

## **CC**

- The Speaker, Parliament of Uganda
- The CEO, Electricity Regulatory Authority