

166.

The Energy Africa Needs to Develop – and Fight Climate Change

TED Talk
By Rose M. Mutiso

https://www.ted.com/talks/rose_m_mutiso_the_energy_africa_needs_to_develop_and_fight_climate_change#t-395901

English Tips

Imperative – An essential or urgent thing/matter... *“Climate action is a government imperative.” ... “It is imperative to take climate action.”*

Haves and have-nots – People who ‘have’ succeeded and people who ‘have not’ succeeded in a certain area/way... *“Oftentimes education and existing family wealth levels are the differentiating factors between the haves and have-nots.”*

Apartheid – A policy/system of segregation/separation and discrimination of people based on race (most famous example was in South Africa)... *“South Africa’s apartheid lasted from 1948 until 1994.”*

Patronizing – To treat someone in a way that makes them feel small or helpless by telling them information or giving them something... *“It feels patronizing when my boss tell me how to write emails.”*

Turn the tide – To reverse the direction or results of a trend or event... *“Our team was behind at halftime, but eventually the tide turned and we won by two points.” ... “Ah, the tides have turned! We ended up winning!”*

Discussion Questions

1. How would you summarize the presentation?
2. Did you agree or disagree with anything in particular?
3. Please create your own original question about the topic.
4. Regarding climate change, discuss the responsibility and power dynamics of individuals, companies, and governments.
5. The speaker shared how African countries need to use more carbon in the short term in order to develop sustainably. Can you think of similar situations that might be necessary contradictions?
6. Let’s discuss the idea of ‘victim’. What are valuable ways to help victims heal and become empowered?
7. What forms of energy use in Japan are most and least necessary?
8. How do you think energy use will be different in 20 years in Japan and globally? Why?

Transcript

166.

Think about this. Californians use more electricity playing video games than the entire country of Senegal uses overall. Also, before gyms were shut down due to COVID, New Yorkers could work out in a 10-degree-Celsius gym because the cold apparently **burns** (*uses up*) more calories. And yet only three percent of Nigerians have air conditioners.

00:25 As you can see, there's a **mind-blowing** (*shocking*) gap between the energy **haves and** the energy **have-nots**. And across the globe, we have incredible energy inequality. Billions of people simply lack enough energy to build a better life: affordable, abundant and reliable energy to run their businesses without daily **blackouts** (*power cuts*), to preserve their crops from **rotting** (*decaying, going bad*), to power life-saving medical equipment, to work from home and do Zoom calls with their colleagues, to run trains and factories – basically, to grow and to prosper and to access both dignity and opportunity. Rich countries have that kind of energy, **whereas** (*contrasting with*) most countries in Africa, and many elsewhere simply don't. And those billions of people are falling further and further behind the rest of the world.

01:13 In addition to taking their energy abundance for granted, the wealthy take something else for granted: that everyone should fight climate change exactly the same way. Tackling climate change will require an accelerated transition to low-carbon energy sources. And yet, emissions continue to **climb** (*increase*) year after year, threatening to **blow** (*exceed, overreach, surpass*) our tight carbon budget. That's what I want to talk about today.

01:36 The carbon budget is an estimation of the total emissions that our planet's atmosphere can safely **absorb** (*receive, take in*). Faced with an **imperative** to not explode this carbon budget, the world is looking at Africa in a completely **contradictory** (*conflicting, opposing*) way. On one side, it wants us to grow, to emerge from **abject** (*pitiful, miserable*) poverty, to build a middle class, to own cars and air conditioners and other modern **amenities** (*features, services*) – because after all, Africa is the next global market.

02:03 On the other side, because they are anxious to demonstrate action on climate change, rich countries in the West are increasingly restricting their funding to only renewable energy sources, **effectively** (*actually*) telling Africa and other poor nations to either develop with no carbon or to limit their development **ambitions** (*desires, hopes*) altogether.

02:21 Africa obviously needs to develop. That's non-negotiable. And I want to make the case today that Africa must be prioritized when it comes to what's left in the carbon budget. In other words, Africa must be allowed to, yes, produce more carbon in the short term so we can grow, while the rich world needs to drastically cut their emissions.

02:41 Africans have a right to **aspire to** (*hope for, aim for*) the same prosperity that everyone else enjoys. And we deserve the same chance at a job, at an education, at dignity, and opportunity. We also understand very well that the entire world needs to get to a zero-carbon future. This might sound contradictory, but consider these three points.

166.

03:04 First, Africa isn't the **culprit** (*offender, guilty party*) of climate change. It's a victim. Africa and its more than one billion people are among the most vulnerable to climate change on the planet, facing the worst impacts of extreme weather, **drought** (*lack of rain*) and heat. And yet, if you look at the carbon footprint of the entire African continent, 48 African countries combined are responsible for less than one percent of **accumulative** (*total*) carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Even if every one of the one billion people in sub-Saharan Africa tripled their electricity consumption overnight, and if all of that new power came from natural gas-fired plants, we estimate that the additional CO2 that Africa would add would equal to just one percent of total global emissions.

03:47 Second, Africa needs more energy to fight climate change, not less. Because of its climate vulnerability, Africa's climate fight is about adaptation and resilience, and climate adaptation is energy-intensive. To respond to extreme weather, Africans will need more resilient infrastructure. **We're talking** (*this means*) seawalls, highways, safe buildings, and more. To **cope** (*deal*) with drought, Africans will need pumped **irrigation** (*water systems*) for their agriculture, and many will need **desalination** (*salt removal*) for fresh water. And to survive **soaring** (*rapidly increasing*) temperatures, Africans will need cold storage and **ACs** (*air conditioners*) in hundreds of millions of homes, offices, warehouses, factories, data centers, and the like. These are all energy-intensive activities. If we fail at **mitigation** (*reduction*), the rich countries' plan B for climate change is to simply adapt. Africans need and deserve that same **capacity** (*ability, capability*) for adaptation.

04:41 Third, imposing mitigation on the world's poor is widening economic inequality. We're creating energy **apartheid**. Working in global energy and development, I often hear people say, "Because of climate, we just can't afford for everyone to live our lifestyles." That viewpoint is worse than **patronizing**. It's a form of racism, and it's creating a **two-tier** (*two-level*) global energy system with energy abundance for the rich and tiny solar lamps for Africans.

05:08 The global market for natural gas is a great example of this. Large Western companies are actively developing gas fields in African countries to run industry and generate electricity in Asia or in Europe. And yet, when these same African countries want to build power plants at home to use gas for their own people, the Western development and finance communities say, "No, we won't fund that."

05:31 And here's the **irony** (*paradox, seeming contradiction*). Many poor countries are already far ahead of the West when it comes to transitioning to a low-carbon energy system. In Kenya, where I'm from, we generate most of our electricity carbon-free. Renewable sources such as **geothermal** (*earth heat energy*), **hydro** (*water energy*) and wind provide nearly 80 percent of our electricity. In the US, that figure is only 17 percent.

05:52 So let me repeat my points. Everyone must get to a zero-carbon future. In the transition, Africa and other poor nations deserve to get the balance of what's remaining in the world's carbon budget. For economic competitiveness, for

166.

climate adaptation, for global stability and for economic justice, rich and high-emitting countries must **uphold** (*maintain*) their responsibility to lead on decarbonization, starting in their own economies.

06:21 We all have a **collective** (*shared*) responsibility to **turn the tide** on climate change. If we fail, it won't be because Senegal or Kenya or Benin or Mali decided to build a **handful** (*small number*) of natural gas power plants to provide economic opportunity for their people. Thank you.