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COP 28, make or break decisions for the planet!



Members of different CSOs including ActionAid stage a protest during the COP 28 meeting in Dubai.

World leaders have gathered in Dubai since 30th November 2023 for another round of climate talks for the 28th round until 12th December 2023. COP 28 comes at a time when the global geopolitical context defined by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, COVID-19, deepening debt crisis, and the food and cost-of-living crisis have exacerbated the effects of the climate crisis, now universally accepted as the 21st-century threat to the survival of humanity and the health of the planet.

In less than two months, a buildup Summit to COP 28 happened in Kenya, dubbed the first Africa Climate Summit hosted by HE. President William Ruto the current Chair of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) under the auspices of the African Union. Attended by an estimated 5,000 delegates from across the continent and the global south, the Summit sought to unite African Heads of State to set priorities for Africa for COP 28 while highlighting opportunities and barriers for climate investment in the African continent.

How different is COP 28 from previous COPs?

The science is clear: the world is not on track as per the Paris Agreement 2015, whose overarching goal is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” The 2023 Emissions Gap Report warns that the world is heading for 2.5°C–2.9°C of warming if governments do not agree to and implement more ambitious targets by 2035. Yet findings from the 2023 Production Gap Report reveal that governments still plan to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels than is consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

Africa's greatest priority remains to be adaptation to the effects of the climate crisis. We remain to be energy insufficient and food insecure amidst the crisis. Over the years, health as a critical area has missed in discussions at COP. Lastly, Climate financing has started changing, and more focus is being put on more of private financing than on public financing.

At COP26 in 2021, governments and private philanthropies pledged nearly \$2 billion to support Indigenous Peoples and local communities' tenure rights. Last year's COP27 created a new "loss and damage" fund to help vulnerable communities respond to climate disasters. The world needs an ambitious outcome to accelerate the energy transition and put it on a path to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. For an ambitious and critically needed energy and agriculture outcome at COP 28, parties must agree to increase clean energy, phase out fossil fuels, accelerate agricultural adaptation and operationalize loss and damage framework.

On the 30th of November 2023, COP28 began with a major announcement where the world governments finally announced the operationalization of the loss and damage fund. The announcement was celebrated by observers at COP 28 – mainly the civil society, terming it a big moment and an important first step towards addressing climate impacts.

Are COP 28's decisions in the right direction so far?

As ActionAid Kenya, while we recognize there is much more work to be done on the loss and damage fund and the need for the World Bank to prove its ability to ensure that funds get to the vulnerable communities, we welcome its operationalization at COP28. It is a starting point where we hope it can only get better.



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Days later, towards the end of week one, during actions staged by civil society such as the "Fill the Loss and Damage Fund now, attended by the writer, Civil society organizations called out on governments for their support for carbon credit deals and disinterest in phasing out fossil fuels. They criticized the world leaders' "doublespeak" character for agreeing to operationalize the loss of damage fund but, on the other hand, failing to adopt a decarbonizing pathway.

Climate campaigners continue condemning the polluting influence of the fossil fuel industry on the COP process. With COP28, presided over by an oil executive who is the CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), it is beyond satire for such a person to lead the world's climate crisis response.

Incredible Insights from Kishushe: ActionAid Kenya's Board Visit to Taita Taveta



AAIK board members and senior management after a meeting with members of Sauti Ya Wanawake in Kishushe.

From December 4th to 8th, the ActionAid International Kenya board and senior management embarked on a transformative journey. We immersed ourselves in the vibrant community of Kishushe, Taita Taveta County. Our mission? To witness the life-changing impacts of our Local Rights Programme (LRP) firsthand.

During the visit, it was clear that the LRP's focus on access to basic rights and services is making a difference. From improvements in education and health care to increased civic engagement, the stories of empowerment and resilience were truly inspiring.

The team also held discussions with Taita Taveta county leadership led by the deputy governor Christine Saru Kilalo. During the meeting, the teams discussed areas of priority for county action and partnership opportunities.

What stood out the most was the inclusive nature of our programmes. By involving women, girls, boys, and men from marginalized communities, as well as traditional leaders and government officials, we're fostering a holistic approach to development that leaves no one behind.

By working closely with local NGOs, community groups, and grassroots leaders, we're seeing real progress in the fight for social justice. The LRP approach is more than just a funding mechanism; it's a catalyst for sustainable development, empowering both women and men to claim their rights and improve their lives.



Citizens Dialogues held in 11 Counties on the High Cost of living.

Desk research by ActionAid Kenya International has found that Kenya's reliance on a \$2.34 billion IMF loan has led to the IMF introducing and imposing conditionalities to the government of Kenya, including tax policy changes, scrapping fuel subsidies, and fiscal adjustments aimed at consolidating resources to repay the IMF debts. This has contributed to increased charges for government services, higher electricity tariffs, and financial strain on citizens.

The current food crisis is a result of several factors, including drought following a sixth failed rain season. The increasing intensity and shorter cycles between droughts have affected crop yields for five consecutive seasons. Pastoralist communities have also lost substantial numbers of livestock due to malnutrition. Simultaneously, the scarcity and soaring prices of imported food have further strained the availability of essential nutrition for the population.



Citizens gather at Ufungamano House for deliberation on the high cost of living.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), prices across sectors have surged significantly, with transport costs rising by 13.1%, and the food and non-alcoholic beverages sector witnessing a 7.5% increase between August 2022 and August 2023. This inflationary pressure, compounded by climate change-induced prolonged droughts, has severely disrupted Kenya's agricultural sector, leading to water scarcity, reduced crop yields, and livestock losses.

This combination has left many Kenyans at risk of malnutrition and food insecurity.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by multiple crises that impact their food intake, education, their right to live free from child marriage, and their mental health and wellbeing.

Amidst these challenges, ActionAid International Kenya, in collaboration with partners across the country worked together to initiate a people-driven solution to the issue of high cost of living in the country.

The initiative dubbed People's Assembly on the Cost of Living in Kenya, aimed to facilitate broad dialogue to discuss the high cost of living, collate community demands, and bring parliamentarians face-to-face with citizens to address the skyrocketing cost of living in Kenya.

The People's Assembly activities culminated into a People's National Economic Recovery Conference where citizens, CSOs held discussions on the cost of living and in unison presented their resolutions to the government. Among the resolutions is for the government to follow the constitution and make life bearable to Kenyans by addressing the high cost of living.



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