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SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR THE POOREST COMMUNITIES AND A MORE EQUITABLE CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

The Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ), an environmental justice organisation has been working on promoting sustainable energy for rural communities in Zambia. CEJ with support from World Wide Fund for Nature Zambia Office, did a study on the alternative sources of energy used in rural communities with focus on Chongwe and Rufunsa in Lusaka Province, Zambia. The study showed that most households used firewood for cooking, grass for lighting and charcoal for heating. Despite the alternative sources promoted being available, they are not accessible and not affordable for rural communities.

Zambia has vast oil and gas reserves and abundant renewable energy potential. Yet the country's energy crisis undermines its ability to reduce poverty and support socio-economic development. There is need to secure access to energy for poor communities within the country, analyse the impacts and explore how local and international oil, coal and gas companies can contribute to tackling energy poverty in Zambia where they operate by developing initiatives with government, donors and civil society.

CEJ's approach is to build an 'evidence base' for advocacy work with government, business and civil society. Developing this kind of evidence also facilitates advocacy in the policy arena and catalyses change in policy and practice. By building dialogue and problem-solving capacities among stakeholders and promoting good practice and learning from failure we seek to stimulate the replication and 'scaling up' of effective technologies and approaches.

WWF Global research report states that 1.3 billion people - 20% of the world's population have no electricity, and 2.7 billion people do not have clean and safe access to energy for cooking, leading them to breathe in toxic smoke created when burning charcoal, wood, coal or animal waste to cook their food.

CEJ's sustainable energy department works to promote access to sustainable alternative energy for the poorest communities and a more equitable consumption of energy resources. Energy access is an area of great inequity. Access to sustainable modern energy services underpins health, education and livelihoods and increases resilience to climate change, yet millions of people have no access to electricity and use dangerous and unhealthy fuels for lighting and cooking. CEJ thrives to come up with initiatives to improve people's access to sustainable energy, to promote socio-economic development and reduce poverty. Furthermore, adapting initiatives to specific social, cultural and political contexts, learning from successful experiences and scaling up successful pilot projects are all key challenges facing access to energy projects.

We therefore request the Zambian Government to do the following;

- **Invest in Energy security:** Dependence on imported fossil fuels leaves many countries vulnerable to disruption in supply and the accompanying economic and development impact. Increased use of efficient and renewables systems improves energy security, by boosting resource productivity, avoiding excessive dependence on imported fuels, developing local sources and diversifying energy portfolios and suppliers.
- **Invest in Economic development:** Lack of access to sustainable alternative energy constrains opportunities for economic development and improved living conditions. Renewables and energy efficiency systems support a sustained GDP growth by improving economic and environmental performance, enhancing technological innovation and creating new commercial opportunities.
- **Invest in Social equity:** Access to and use of energy is marked by an uneven distribution in many countries, and between the rich and poor within them. Developing distributed energy generation and sustainable renewable systems can enable more equitable access to energy services and create new job opportunities, especially in rural areas.
- **Invest in Environmental protection:** Most current energy generation and use results in serious health and environmental impacts at local, regional, and global levels – including climate change which threatens human well-being and ecosystems. Accelerating energy efficiency improvements and deployment of sustainable renewable energy results in significantly lower environmental pollution

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